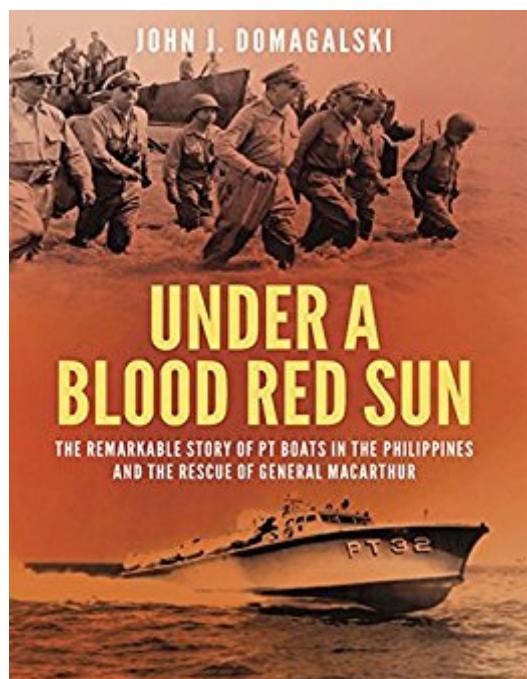


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# Under A Blood Red Sun: The Remarkable Story Of PT Boats In The Philippines And The Rescue Of General MacArthur



## **Synopsis**

During the opening days of World War II in the Pacific, a small group of American sailors in the Philippines were propelled into the forefront of the fighting. They were manned with six small wooden torpedo (PT) boats and led by a courageous, larger-than-life character in Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley. The men of Torpedo Boat Squadron 3 faced insurmountable odds as they conducted a series of heroic operations against the navy and air power of Imperial Japan. As America's defense of the Philippines crumbled under the weight of a massive Japanese assault, the courageous activities of Bulkeley's men made headlines across the U.S. "often as the only good news coming from the bleak Pacific front. The unit achieved everlasting fame by evacuating General Douglas MacArthur from the front. Then the squadron continued to fight on until all six of its torpedo boats were lost under fire. The fate of the doomed American defenders was sealed when the Japanese won the battle for the islands in the spring of 1942. The exploits of the unit were immortalized in the blockbuster 1945 movie *They Were Expendable*, starring John Wayne and Robert Montgomery, but since then the saga of Bulkeley and his men has slipped into history. Under a Blood Red Sun revives the story of the Philippine PT-boats through the intertwined accounts of Bulkeley and his subordinate officers and men. It is a story of the courage and sacrifice of men thousands of miles from their homeland, representing American gallantry and fighting prowess, while giving the Japanese a taste of what was further to come their way.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

I was excited when I first heard this book was coming out, since the adventures of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 3 and the Philippines in WWII have been a bit of an interest of mine ever since I saw the film *THEY WERE EXPENDABLE*. Since then I've read several books dealing with the fall and recapture of the Philippines, but there didn't seem to be much out there about MTB-3 besides the original book by William L. White on which the movie was based. So in one respect, this book was satisfying, because it fills in a lot of information that was unavailable at the time White's book was written. It includes the background of squadron commander John Bulkley, plenty of detail on the design and building of the first PT boats, more about the other officers in the squadron besides the four who were interviewed for *THEY WERE EXPENDABLE*, and fuller descriptions of the actual combat activities of MTB-3 (with the evacuation of MacArthur dealt with most thoroughly). The downside is, the book took me quite a while to get through because of the way it was written. The style is choppy, occasionally producing some very awkward sentences in efforts to dramatize incidents that would be quite gripping enough if stated plainly. The timeline is also somewhat disconcerting, as it switches back and forth between different groups of characters in alternating paragraphs and chapters (an issue I've run into frequently in recently-published nonfiction). There is a lot of material on the general situation in the Philippines during the Japanese invasion, perhaps more than needed—while it's helpful to have some context for what was going on at the time of the PT boats' exploits, there does seem to be much that's not entirely necessary or relevant, with whole chapters spent on the decisions of generals, and away from the main characters of the narrative. So if you're interested in learning more about Bulkley and his squadron, you'll very likely want to read this as a companion to the original *THEY WERE EXPENDABLE*; though in a literary sense I think a better job could have been done with it.

This is a good story of a small but important part of the opening salvo of World War II in the Pacific. I did enjoy the read, though I was fairly familiar with this material already. As a story, it works well. As a history book, it has some problems. I did not find any factual revelations or new insights here. A good portion of the story seems to be paraphrased from the Iliff Richardson manuscript, an excellent memoir of these events written by the executive officer of PT 34 shortly after loss of the PT boats. There is a lot of excess material which relates to the fall of the Philippines in general, but these long

segments have little to do with the story of RON 3 itself. No matter how careful the writer, every history book will have one or more errors, usually small. This book certainly has its share. There seems to be a misunderstanding of the actual geographic configuration of the Cavite Peninsula. Also, the author refers perhaps a dozen times to 'Stanley Point', when it seems to me obvious that he is referring to 'Sangley Point'. I had never heard of a Stanley point on the Cavite Peninsula. I did some personal and Internet research and again could find no such geographic location. Another example; In describing one mission at night, it starts out on a clear "moonless" night, and a short while later they are maneuvering to silhouette a target behind the "bright moon". Several statements concerning PBY Patrol Wing 10 are in error. Such conflicts and errors should have been caught by the writer and/or editor. The timeline was discontinuous, and this was occasionally confusing. Finally, the maps were too simplistic for any detailed use. Additional maps, perhaps one depicting the lines of mines across manila harbor which are referred to several times, would have been helpful to the reader. This book is probably good for the casual reader, but it is inadequate for a student of these events. A few more pictures would have been nice, but there are very few surviving from this period of time. The priority was on staying alive, not documenting the process with cameras. To summarize; as an adventure story of a World War II Navy Unit, it is enjoyable. As a history book, it has significant shortcomings. 2 1/2 stars.

Very Good Book

An informative read but more about the fall of the Philippines and less about the PT service than I was hoping for. The maps were primitive and not of much use.

This was a very good book. Having spent time in the Navy I really enjoyed it.

The real McCoy. Well packaged. This will be a great read! Thanks.

Have read on this subject for years and found this book is a welcome change with new information and fast format!!!

A great read regarding war in the Pacific

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