

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANDREW S. ROWAN US Army, Retired (Deceased)



Born in Virginia on 23 April 1857, COL Rowan entered the US Military Academy on 1 July 1877 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the 15th Infantry on 11 June 1881. He was promoted to First Lieutenant in the 9th Infantry on 28 November 1890 and transferred to the 19th Infantry the following year.

In April 1898, with war between Spain and America imminent, President William McKinley needed information about Cuba, one of Spain's former colonies. The president went to Arthur Wagner, head of the Military Information Division, and asked whom he should send to Cuba to carry a critical message to GEN Calixto Garcia. Wagner recommended "a young officer here in Washington; a lieutenant named Rowan, who will carry it for you." "Send him!" was the President's order.

Thus began a harrowing, dangerous journey deep into Cuba to meet with the Cuban revolutionary and enemy of Spain. Rowan understood the dangers: upon his departure from the US, a state of war did not exist. Rowan arrived in Cuba on 23 April. Two days later, the US declared war on Spain and the situation instantly became deadly serious. It took another week of traveling before Rowan successfully delivered his message to GEN Garcia on 1 May. In his own words, Rowan wrote, "The long and toilsome journey with its many risks, its chances of failure, its chances for death, was over. I had succeeded." He was promoted to Captain with an effective date of 26 April.

The message arranged for a meeting between GEN Shafter and Cuban rebel GEN Garcia to coordinate strategy. Before the war ended, the US spent \$250 million and lost 3,000 lives – 90 percent to infectious diseases. Spain and America signed a peace treaty in Paris on 10 December 1898, establishing the independence of Cuba, ceding Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States, and allowing the US to purchase the Philippines Islands from Spain for \$20 million.



Rowan retired in 1909 as a Major after over 30 years of service, although he had twice attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1922, Rowan was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for “extraordinary heroism in connection with the operation in Cuba in May 1898.” He died in 1943 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

LTC Rowan was posthumously inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988.

Rowan’s journey was the subject of Elbert Hubbard’s 200-word tract entitled, “A Message to Garcia,” published in the March 1899 issue of the magazine The Philistine. By 1915, more than 40 million reprints of the article were in circulation both in the United States and abroad. Rowan’s own account, “How I Carried the Message to Garcia,” was published in Military Intelligence: Its Heroes and Legends, edited by Diane L. Hamm and published by the US Army Intelligence and Security Command History Office (1987).