

4 July, 1930.

ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION.

- R.L. Denig

Reference: Neuva Segovia Nap, R.F.-1:150000; completed October 14, 1929.  
Enclosures: Overlays (7).

1. MISSION.

The mission of the Guardia troops of the Northern Area is to preserve order in a police sense; to hold occupied towns; to prevent banditry in all its forms. From the general nature of past experiences and paragraph one(1) of the Jefe Director's letter dated 27 June, 1930 (Secret), I deduce that my mission is to suppress banditry in all its forms. The step from banditry to actual revolution is short. Therefore my mission is to suppress banditry. ) get!

2. OPPOSING FORCES.

4. OWN FORCES.

- (1) For disposition see attached memorandum for the reorganization of the Northern Area, dated 30 June, 1930.
- (2) For numerical strength see the same memorandum.
- (3) Physical condition of my troops is excellent. At present there is practically no sickness. The men are well hardened by recent patrolling.
- (4) Moral is high in all stations with the possible exception of Pueblo Nuevo. In this latter station there was a mutinous disturbance about one month ago, the principles of which have been apprehended and are being punished.
- (5) Training high, especially for trail work. Patrol leaders are all of proven ability and aggressive. Some new men have been received from the south; they are scattered throughout the entire area, and should be soon broken in and not effect the combat efficiency of patrols.
- (6) All my troops are trained as infantry; a certain number are also proficient in the handling of the Lewis gun and Sub Thompson. As many men are mounted as can be with the animals at hand. This to conserve the strength of the men and to permit greater distances being covered. For general combat purposes in this area, with large patrols, half mounted and half on foot is a good arrangement.
- (7) The troops are armed with Krag rifles, Sub Thompson machine guns, Lewis guns, Heavy Brownings, rifle and hand grenades. Bayonets add weight, make a noise, shine in the sun and are better not taken on the trail, especially as the men are not trained in their use and do not take to them naturally. The new equipment has been found satisfactory, especially the belts, as they are lighter, made for Krag ammunition, which prevents the loss of valuable ammunition on the trail. The belts would be better if provided with suspenders to keep the weight off the

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hips. The Marine Corps canteen is more serviceable than the flat one now issued. Shelter halves seem to be preferred to ponchos. Clothing is of good quality; on extended operations it wears out quickly due principally to thorns and briars. In such cases "drops" of clothing may have to be made. All stations are supplied with machine guns and ammunition for local use. Message books with carbon should be in the possession of all officers; also compass and at least one map.

*GN Food Procurement* ||| Food is obtained locally and when on patrol, the officers and men live off the country. Certain areas as Cerro Blanco, El Silencio and Chipote are nearly bare of food for large patrols, and in these areas, cheese, coffee, salt, lard, beans, corn and dulce should be packed.

Each large patrol should have a medical corps man with kit; lacking that, a kit at least.

There is a sufficient supply today to carry on an operation of two weeks duration, however, the patrols that have been out for the past two weeks have not been issued new clothing and equipment. When this is done there will have to be a new supply of practically all articles to meet pressing needs, that can not now be foreseen.

Supplies come by plane to Ocotal and Apali, from where they are "packed" to outlying stations.

(8)

Communications of stations is as follows:

- (a) Radio--worked on schedules; however in emergencies any station can be kept in constant communication.  
Managua Net--Includes Ocotal.  
Ocotal Net---Santa Maria; Telpaneca; San Juan; Condega (Marine Post); Apali (Marine Post--also worked by buzzer).  
Apali Net----Quilali; Jicaro (by buzzer only).
- (b) The following stations have the Nicaraguan telegraph service, which in case of need can be kept open at all times:-  
Ocotal; Somoto; Pueblo Nuevo; Palacaguina; Dipilto; Esteli; Limay; La Trinidad; Condega (Marine Post).
- (c) The following stations have telephones which operate over the buzzer or telegraph lines: Ocotal; Somoto; Dipilto; Apali (Marine Post); Jicaro.
- (d) The following station has no communication. At present a buzzer line is being run from Jicaro:- Jalapa.
- (e) Runners can be procured, but during periods of bandit activities they cannot be depended upon. Usually they wont go at all.

Aviation, by means of "drops", "pickups", observation and landings on the following fields is an invaluable means of communication. Ocotal; Apali; Quilali; Condega; Esteli; Jalapa.

All officers should have field message books with carbon. All officers should be familiar with the means and methods of preparing "pickups". Patrols should have smoke candles to call the pilots attention to them.

(9)

Marine Corps forces may be expected to hold or reinforce such stations as requested, so as to release more Guardia for field duty, or to come to the assistance of heavily pressed Guardia

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troops.

Marine Corps Aviation may be expected to bomb and machine gun selected areas and targets on approved requests, and to keep up communications with stations and patrols by means of "drops", "pickups", observation and landings.

Guardia troops in adjacent areas may be expected to cooperate with my troops and in any combined operation in my area they would probably be placed under my command, thus insuring unity of command.

The strength of the Marine Corps forces in this area and adjacent Guardia troops are from the information at hand, of sufficient strength for the above missions.

B.

BANDIT FORCES.

- (1) Distributed in small groups, not far separated, under sub-Jefes, that can quickly combine to form larger groups of from 100 to 300 men, under big Jefes.

The principal areas so infested with small groups and the local big Jefes, are:-

\* Somoto Mountain area (168-345)---Salgado.

\* Cuje Mines area (202-363)---Ortez.

\* Palacaguina-point(208-361)-Daraili-Ducelito(202-346), area---Umanzor.

\* Point on Coco River at (208-361)-San Juan-junction of San Juan and Coco rivers, area---Padilla and Ortez.

\* San Juan-Las Vueltas-Zapotillal(241-373)-junction of San Juan and Coco rivers, area---Padilla and Ortez.

- (2) Each area of itself can probably muster about 100 to 150 armed men. Two or more areas can and do combine, which accounts for the larger reported groups.
- (3) Physical condition fair, probably some small pox and much calentura.
- (4) Moral was no doubt excellent up to a week ago due to the extensive and intensive propaganda that centered about the alleged return of Sandino, and to the fact that they had been able to concentrate large groups. This moral factor is bolstered up by the fact that they have succeeded in killing and wounding several Guardia on 28 June. Such an event is likely to be exaggerated into a victory by their Jefes.

On the other hand, the constant patrolling by the Guardia has kept them on the run, wearing them down. Salgado's group which came East to the El Silencio and Cerro Blanco area, is known to have had several desertions. This due in part to heavy losses inflicted on the bandits in the two contacts of Captain Fagan and those of Captains Anderson and Schwerin; to the constant pursuit and to the fact that bandits do not care to operate out of their own area, where they know all the people and are familiar with all the trails.

Since June 29, no bandit information has been received in spite of the fact that great efforts have been made to locate them. From this and the above mentioned reasons, I assume that

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- There moral is now at a low point and will so remain for several weeks at least.
- (5) Training poor for concerted action in combat as has been repeatedly proven, in their not being able to deliver coordinated rushes when so ordered by their Jefes. They are cunning in laying ambushes.
- (6) Their composition may be termed gorilla bands with some infantry training. A certain number of Guardia deserters are in their ranks and it is reported that these men are used in the points for obvious reasons. As many as can procure mounts.
- (7) They are poorly armed in the main with an assortment of fire arms from Springfield rifles to muzzle loading shot guns. Krags and "Con-cons" predominate. They have pistols and revolvers of all makes, and cutachas.

All the big Jefes have automatics as well as some of the Sub-Jefes. It is known that they do have some Browning Automatic rifles, Lewis guns and Sub-Thompsons.

All arms are poorly cared for.

Ammunition cannot be said to be plentiful, and much of it is old. Much of it has been dum-dumed. The recent contacts have no doubt reduced their supply to a low ebb. On June 6th, one group is estimated to have fired 2500 rounds.

"Bombas de lata", or home made grenades are commonly used. These have short range, force of the explosion is mostly upwards; however they do have a real effect on the moral of those at whom thrown.

Equipment poor, groups have been reported as well clothed in khaki, but generally it may be said that they are poorly clothed and frequently in rags. This is not a great hardship on the mozo type.

Food is gathered locally and consists principally of beans, cheese and tortillas. Most of their food for large groups is gained by foraging in the better cultivated areas adjacent to their hangouts.

- (8) Communications are of the "grape vine" variety and runners, both seem to be efficient. Some use may be made of the telegraph. A large volume of code messages at any one station is quickly known and considered to be about the adjacent area.

Scout planes by their presence give information of actual or assumed locations of patrols.

- (9) The assistance of one group to another is poorly coordinated and when attempted, the news of the concentrations is likely to quickly leak out. Coordination may be said to be poor.

C.

RELATIVE COMBAT STRENGTH.

- (1) I can concentrate from four to five officers and 100 men in any of the above areas, in from seven to ten hours, and from six to ten officers and 200 men in twenty-four hours. The time element to start when the order is received at the most distant post, this depends on the radio schedules; this has been a variable figure of from one hour to nineteen, six hours should be a fair average.

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To concentrate 200 men might dangerously deplete the strength of some of the posts. To take care of this there are larger garrisons in Ocotal and Jicaro, with which to replace men moved out of other stations.

Marine Corps forces may be expected to take over certain stations and thus further strengthen my dispositions and permit me greater flexibility.

- (2) The numerical strength of both Guardia and bandits is about equal in the aggregate. In ambushes they strive for superiority in this particular and may be said to always have it. However experience has shown that we are as 1 to 5 in combat efficiency.
- (3) I consider my troops as definitely superior in physical condition. Due to better care, food, shelter, clothing and regular habits.
- (4) My troops have superior moral than the bandits. Better leadership, food, arms, equipment, ammunition, communications, medical attention, pay and the fact that the law is on their side, assure this. Guardias lay great faith in planes; the bare fact that drops can be made to their officers is a strong moral feature.
- (5) My troops are better trained.
- (6) While both Guardia and bandits may be considered as partially mounted infantry, the composition of Guardia patrols is always based on having in addition to the Krag, one or more automatic weapons with which to gain and keep fire superiority. Rifle and hand grenades for both short and long distance indirect fire.
- (7) I am positively superior in all material means. Supplies are fairly constant and received and issued from definite points; thus assuring greater flexibility for patrols.
- (8) With the means of communication at my disposal, radio, telegraph buzzer, telephone, runners and planes, I am definitely superior to the bandits in this respect.
- (9) With a trained organization under central command whose stations are located at strategical points, I am far superior to the bandits in respect to assistance from other friendly troops. Guardia patrols are always ready to clear and can quickly do so, and can be directed at a definite point with a clear cut mission to perform.
- (10) From the above analysis, I consider that I am superior in all respects to the bandits forces that are likely to be in opposition to my execution of the mission to suppress banditry.

So: Approx. 2000 "bandits" ?

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Denig's Arrogance, self-assuredness \*

3. A.

BANDIT SITUATION.

PLANS OPEN TO THE ENEMY.

- (1) To forage, rob and steal by means of small groups scattered through the more populated and better cultivated areas adjacent to their mail hangouts, as set forth in paragraph 2.B.(1).
- (2) To lay in ambush and attempt to destroy Guardia patrols, while on routine administrative duties.
- (3) To lay in ambush and attempt to destroy Guardia patrols while on combat missions.
- (4) To attack isolated stations by surprise.

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- (5) To combine groups from one or more areas for the purpose of:-
  - (a) Attacking Guardia stations or large patrols.
  - (b) Making demonstrations with the purpose of drawing out Guardia patrols so they could be dealt with as in 3.A.(3), and their home stations as in 3.A.(4).
- (6) To make demonstrations with a political end in view, such as to intimidate voters from going to the polls.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE BANDIT PLANS.

- (1) To forage, rob and steal. This may be said to be the normal employment of bandit groups, as they live in areas under scant cultivation and containing small quantities of food and other supplies. For the purpose of accomplishing this, small groups by stealth make sudden raids and quickly return to their hidden camps. These raids can be consummated in a period of 24 hours. Dry weather and light nights favor such raids. They seem to be usually made on holidays, Saturdays and Sundays, for the reason that more people are then travelling ~~and~~ the isolated farms and smaller communities are likely to be deserted, which favors the bandits.
- (2) To lay ambushes under 3.A.(2); they first learn the routes followed, the strength of the patrol generally used, the dates of the month and the hour of the day that patrols ordinarily pass certain points. These points are a matter of general knowledge and can easily be gained by observation. Spys at home stations of the patrols no doubt give out such information. Ambushes are laid with the following points in view:-
  - (a) A place where the bandits can make a quick "get away". For this purpose they pick out knolls having a clear field of fire and a steep reverse slope, leading preferably into thick country to facilitate escape.
  - (b) Sharp bends in a trail are likely spots to be ranged on.
  - (c) Deep depressions such as stream crossings, and saddles between hills are also likely traps. From 30 to 50 bandits usually lay such ambushes. Those having the better arms being placed to sweep the trail, bomb throwers usually in the center, at a high point, to throw on the opposing main body; machette men on the flanks to cut down those who run in panic.
- (3) Same as in 3.B.(2); only the groups are larger, cover more ground and are better armed and led. More time is required to prepare the ambush as special trails are cut and emplacements made.
- (4) Most isolated stations in this area can be easily approached and are commanded by hills at short range. Bandit attacks on such places are not attempted with much less than 100 available men. Fire is delivered with the hopes of inflicting enough casualties and material damage to cause confusion, then to rush the station.
- (5) In the combination of bandit groups the time element, condition of trails and secrecy are the important points for them to consider. The usual well known bandit routes are set forth on

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the enclosed overlay. Combination having been effected, the bandit procedure is the same as under 3.B.(2), and (4).

C.

BANDIT'S PROBABLE INTENTIONS.

- (1) Isolated raids are normal, therefore constant.
- (2) (3) & (4). Ambushes and attacks on isolated stations are a constant threat and a means of combat much sought after by the bandits.
- (5) To combine small groups in each bandit area is easy of accomplishment and frequently done. To combine larger groups is more difficult of accomplishment; the various Jefes do not favor working under the directions of one of their colleagues in banditry. They are without doubt fully informed of my strength and situation, but are in the dark as to my intentions, except the knowledge that my patrols are always aggressive and desire to make and keep contact with bandit forces. They are doubtless aware that the news of any large concentration will become known and result in the maximum number of combat patrols at full strength marching on their reported locations. For this reason they give out false information as to their destinations; this is easy to do as the natives will repeat what they have been told to say.
- (6) I decide from the present attitude and the actions of the bandits for the past month that they will attempt to organize large local groups as in plan 3.A.(5), to threaten Guardia patrols and stations and if a favorable opportunity arises to combine two or more of these groups for a concerted effort at some chosen objective; to accomplish a military defeat of the Guardia or to loot a town that in their minds has rich stores. The coming elections may be the back ground for such activities.

4. OWN SITUATION.A. PLANES OPEN TO ME.

- \* (1) Plan 1; to constantly patrol bandit areas and their supply areas contiguous thereto.
- (2) Plan 2; to be prepared to throw strong patrols on threatened points and bandit concentrations.
- (3) Plan 3; to be prepared to move reinforcements from the quiet areas to stations near the threatened or actual bandit activities
- (4) Plan 4; to be prepared to defend all stations.
- \* (5) Plan 5; to be prepared to launch a combined and coordinated effort against bandit concentrations.

B. ANALYSIS OF PLANS OPEN TO ME.

- (1) By plan 1, I will discourage foraging by the apprehension or killing of bandits, thus bringing the bandit groups to a condition of want or actual suffering. I will gain information as to the bandits intentions. Small bandit groups will be kept constantly on the move and in constant uncertainty as to my intentions and locations of Guardia patrols. This will so harass them that enlistments will be discouraged in their ranks. Combinations by small groups into larger will be largely prevented.

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and groups will not feel secure in any one place. Constant movement of my patrols will, will regardless of contacts, produce the above results. This is a method of attrition and should be employed. As all Guardia movements are based upon the movement of patrols, the following observations based on experience are here included. They do not properly belong in an estimate:

- Dennis's experience tells him:*
- (a) Mounted men are more observing than foot soldiers on a narrow difficult trail.
  - (b) Men are more vigilant at the commencement of a march than at the end.
  - (c) Men are inclined to look down hill, the deeper the view, the more are eyes fixed below. Men should be cautioned to look up.
  - (d) When the brush permits, flankers should be sent out to examine knolls and other likely places for ambushes.
  - (e) The point should be 100 to 200 yards in advance of the main body, so both parties cannot be caught in the same trap.
  - (f) At least one man in the point should be instructed to look to the right or left rear at all times, as an ambush laid for the main body may frequently be so detected.
  - (g) The point being far separated from the main body, permits the use of either as a flanking group to come to the assistance of the other.
  - (h) The point as well as the main body should have both automatic weapons and bombs.
  - (i) No patrol in dangerous country should consist of less than twelve men and an officer.
  - (j) If two officers are present one should always be with the point.
  - (k) Frequently there are little used trails either above or below the main travelled trail. They are probably safer than the main traveled trail as it is the one that is ranged on by the better weapons.
  - (l) Sightseeing at sites of previous contacts should not be indulged in; it detracts attention; an ambush may be laid just ahead.
  - (m) Patrols passing frequently over the same route, should vary the time, both as to dates and hour and their formation.
  - (n) Knolls should be burnt smooth of undergrowth.
  - (o) Groups of machette workers should be carefully observed, and under some conditions disarmed.
  - (p) Movements of patrols should not be divulged. Men should not know where or when they are going.
  - (q) When meeting other points in "Guardia" uniforms, great care should be exercised to insure complete identification.
  - (r) If a knoll has been rushed and taken, pursuit should be by fire, until such time as reorganization is effected.



- (2) Plan 2, is a matter of proper organization and communications which permits strong combat patrols being organized at all stations and cleared with a few hours notice. Such patrols will be able to defeat the usual bandit group. Past experience has shown that one Guardia in ranks is equal to five bandits, and as strong combat patrols rarely consist of less than twenty five enlisted, I consider that a single Guardia combat patrol is equal to or stronger than any local group or combinations of local groups. Hence they should be able to deliver damaging blows
- (3) Plan 3, is not properly a plan, but grows out of all the other plans. It is a matter of proper organization and communications which will permit of a rapid movement of reinforcements to threatened areas. This insures greater strength from which relief patrols can be made up and cleared.
- (4) Plan 4, is a matter of organization which will permit of a proper garrison being maintained, armed, supplied and prepared for defense. This calls for local defense bills at all stations that insure an all around defense.
- (5) Plan 5, is aggressive and suited to the spirit of the Guardia. It assumes the initiative and by proper control can be kept within the bounds desired. In the area selected, the bandits will be kept on the move, allowing them little rest or opportunity to gather supplies. By the destruction of their camps, supplies and other material means of support; the killing and wounding; the forcing of them to use up their ammunition supply; desertions will result, their prestige among the people lowered, and their moral destroyed. This calls for a separate plan for each bandit area, such plan to be put into execution when and at such time it is apparent the most good will result.

1:5  
 "combat efficiency"  
 sounds about right

5.

DECISION.

- A. To adopt Plan 1. Patrolling to be constant in the bandit areas and in their supply areas near by; by patrols sent out at frequent intervals from all stations. This, to break up foraging, annihilate the smaller groups, destroy their physical means of support, prevent the combining of smaller groups into larger and gain information which might permit the ultimate use of Plan 5.
- B. To be prepared to carry out Plan 5, by the preparation of the necessary orders, based primarily on paragraph 2.B.(1).

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