

THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION

By MAJOR GENERAL JOHN A. LEJEUNE

AS YOU ALL know, the Nicaraguan situation has priority over all questions in the Marine Corps at the present time. We are sending down another regiment under Colonel Dunlap, and General Feland is returning to Nicaragua to take command of the brigade. Our force will then total about 2,500 men there. The situation is quiet everywhere in Nicaragua except in the Province of Neuva Segovia, that is, there is apparently no dissatisfaction and certainly no disorder of any description anywhere else. In that province we have garrisons in the principal towns, Ocotal, Somoto, Telepaneca, Jicaro and Quilali, the latter only recently having been occupied by a column sent there.

The part of the province that Sandino is operating in is a wild, mountainous country, and very sparsely settled. In fact, the whole country in which the operations are taking place is mountainous, rugged, cut up with river gorges and ravines, and covered with dense underbrush. There are no roads. What they call a road is simply a sort of trail that ox-carts can travel over. It has two ruts in which the cart wheels run, and that is about all there is to it. In the rainy season the wheels sink down out of sight and about the only means of transportation is the pack train. These roads run in and out and up and down the mountains, and through steep ravines and gorges, and such conditions naturally afford the best possible opportunity for attacks on columns moving along them, especially when accompanied by long trains of ox-carts. So it is a very easy matter for the bandits to conceal themselves in the underbrush and place their machine guns in position so as to sweep the road as the column goes by.

The most recent engagement was at Quilali, in which First Sergeant Bruce was killed and Lieutenant Richal wounded. Upon being attacked, the column took up position, and, according to a despatch received this morning, obtained fire superiority in a short while and drove off the bandits. The column was armed with rifles, hand grenades, a trench mortar and machine guns. The engagement lasted about an hour. In addition to the death of Sergeant Bruce and the wounding of Lieutenant Richal, 4 or 5 other Marines were wounded. The following morning when the column continued its march, thirty dead bodies of the bandits were counted, but it is impossible to state what their total casualties were as all their wounded and no doubt many of their dead also were carried off. The column then went on into Quilali, where a detachment under command of Captain Livingston was stationed. It is reported that the bandits in this engagement were much better armed, two machine guns having been definitely located, and they may have had more, and it is also reported that they had some Thompson sub-machine guns. The dynamite bombs mentioned in the reports were made from dynamite

taken from the storehouse of a mine six months ago and fashioned into crude bombs which, when they explode, are quite effective. They have been using them right along.

In answer to a question as to how the bandits obtained their arms and ammunition, the Major General Commandant stated that in talking to an officer who had been in Nicaragua yesterday the latter had stated that there is a great deal of coffee in that section, a large portion of which has been sacked and ready to ship out. Sandino seized the coffee and took it across the border into Honduras where there are a number of people who make a business of trafficking in arms, and probably acquired his arms and ammunition in that way. It is known



Major General John A. Lejeune, who is now making a personal inspection of the situation in Nicaragua.

that he took the coffee over the border and sold it. It is a perfectly simple matter to buy arms and ammunition from the people who deal in them, as traffic in those commodities is one of the most lucrative in Central America. There is no law against it.

We are sending down a battery of mountain artillery and intend to get mules for its transportation either in Costa Rica or from the Army in Panama. The drawback about getting the mules from the Army is that we will have to carry forage along for them. While there is plenty of native forage—corn and grass—we would have to provide oats for the army mules. The Costa Rican mules are probably nearly as good, and no doubt are accustomed to living on the forage afforded by the country. However, we have made no decision as yet.

Colonel Little stated that while in China they had made a study of the question of forage for animals and had found that while corn kept them looking sleek and fat, that diet did not apparently give the strength and stamina necessary for hard work. A proportion

of oats in their diet was found to be necessary to fit them for hard work.

The important thing in our operations against Sandino is to get the matter cleaned up before the rainy season begins about the first of June. There is no doubt about our driving these bandits out, but what we would like better to do is catch them, especially Sandino himself. It is so easy for him to get out of the country, especially owing to conditions along the border between Nicaragua and Honduras. The inhabitants there pay no attention to the border line at all and smuggling is prevalent. The bad element from Honduras goes across the border into Nicaragua and vice versa. A great many of these people who make up Sandino's followers are outlaws who have committed some offense at home and have fled from justice, and the others are Indians from the mountains.

Sandino himself has been pictured as a patriot. In reality his history is that he committed a murder in Nicaragua some years ago and had to flee the country. He went to Mexico and was a member of the Villaistas, and while there he probably learned what he knows of the art of warfare. After leaving Mexico he wandered around in various Central American countries and finally came to Neuva Segovia in Nicaragua and went to work in Mr. Butter's mine. This was about a year probably before the revolution. He had some row with the mining people which made him disgruntled, so when General Moncada crossed from the east to the west coast with his army, looking for recruits, Sandino with a couple of hundred men from Neuva Segovia was taken into his service. Moncada had lost a good many men and was in need of recruits, but he has since stated that he did not want to take Sandino in his army and only did so because he was pressed by circumstances. He also said that Sandino and his men gave him trouble all the time, did not conform to discipline, and did not obey orders. However, his men were just that many more recruits, so they were kept on.

When General Moncada and his chiefs agreed to turn in their arms, nearly all the other leaders did likewise, but there were a few who wanted to think the matter over. Sandino was one of these latter. All but he went to their homes with their detachments and later turned in their arms, but Sandino held out. He withdrew with his band to Jinotega, where he was communicated with and an interview between General Moncada and himself arranged. General Moncada went to Jinotega with Sandino's father. They had a long conference with him and tried to persuade him to turn in his arms, but he would not do so. Sandino's parents, by the way, are honest, hard-working people, and are well regarded by everyone, as is also a brother, who is employed in one of the mines.

Sandino then took his band of 150 or
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for long lasting.

Francis Bacon
1625

THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION

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200 men to the vicinity of Ocotal. In the meantime we had sent a garrison to Ocotal with the newly appointed Governor, who was a member of the Liberal party. This was in accordance with the agreement made that about one-half of the governors appointed in the disaffected provinces would be Liberals and the other half Conservatives. Captain Hatfield was in command of the garrison, and he got into communication with Sandino and requested or directed him to conform to the terms of the agreement about turning in his arms. Sandino refused in a rather sullen manner, and one night in July made an absolutely unprovoked attack on the town of Ocotal. Prior to that time there had been no hostilities at all. After a stubborn fight, in which he suffered heavy casualties, he was decisively defeated and beaten off.

Shortly after that Major Floyd took a column into Neuva Segovia. He marched through Jicaro and Quilali, where the recent engagement was fought, and met practically no resistance. One man was killed by snipers while entering Telepaneca. Major Floyd, finding no bandits when he got to Quilali, and the rainy season coming on, returned, leaving a garrison at Jicaro and one at Telepaneca. His column then went back to Matagalpa.

During the rainy season it was impossible to conduct any operations owing to lack of roads, and Sandino apparently took advantage of the lull to gather together a considerable force (we do not know its numbers), and, in all probability, traded the coffee for arms and ammunition, as previously described, and spent the time in training his men and in making a stronghold at El Chipote, where his headquarters are. Aeroplane photographs of El Chipote show a number of shacks with little farms, so they are probably growing their own food. The photographs also show many signs of trenches, machine gun nests, and rifle pits.

The first despatches about the engagement at Quilali stated that the bandits were much better armed and equipped and better trained than hitherto, and that they had probably had the benefit of some outside instruction. There was an ex-German sergeant major by the name of Mueller who was with General Moncada when he turned in his arms. He is a soldier of fortune, and after the disarming he left the country and was thought to have gone to Mexico. It is possible that he may have returned to Nicaragua and have become affiliated with Sandino. There was also a Mexican in General Moncada's army, who apparently had a good knowledge of the art of warfare. He may be with Sandino now. Certainly the bandits have obtained someone who has shown them how to use their weapons.

That part of Neuva Segovia Province in which El Chipote is located is a very wild country and right on the Honduras border, and if Sandino finds a considerable force against him he is very liable to escape into Honduras or down the Coco River which empties into the Caribbean Sea. It is practically impossible to

THE FESSENDEN FIFES

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"The 4th Regiment of the U. S. Marines, generally known as 'San Diego's Own,' has seen many years of service, ten of which were spent in bringing to the people of San Domingo such a message of peace, safety, goodwill and order as you have brought to us in Shanghai.

* * * *

"Colonel Davis, officers and men of the 4th Regiment, we are proud of you and appreciate your acceptance of Shanghai's gift of the Fessenden fifes and drums. May they ever remain with you as a record of your China service."

Colonel Davis, commanding officer of the 4th Regiment, accepted the Fessenden fifes in a few well chosen words. Then he called for Bandmaster Francis of the Green Howards and presented him with a gold cigarette box on behalf of the American community as a token of appreciation of Francis' co-operation in the launching of the new drum corps.

Mrs. Cunningham made the presentation of fifes and drums and the Fessenden fifes counter-marched to their post behind the band. The band trooped the line, the trumpeters playing "The March of the French Foreign Legion," drooping their trumpets as the band counter-marched, to take up their fifes and drums and make their debut by playing the Regimental March of the Green Howards—the one piece they had mastered.

Then followed the "march past" of the troops. Passing in review in column of battalion masses, the regiment made an impressive showing. Months of field training are amply justified when men emerge able to wheel and march with the confident precision of these men. Looking down the long lines there is none of the hang-dog expression of indifference to be seen. The carriage of the heads bespeaks pride; the clear eyes gravely searching the horizon bespeak courage; the stocky, slightly swaying shoulders suggest the expression, "What the hell are you going to do about it?" Veterans, these, for all their youth!

And so, under a yellow Chinese sky, before a throng as cosmopolitan in texture as could possibly be conceived, another tradition comes to the Marine Corps. The Fessenden fifes take their places in the Marine Corps Hall of Fame to perpetuate the memory of duty faithfully performed in the land of the Mandarins.

surround him and thus cut off all means of escape because of the difficult topography of the country. Of course, leaving aside all question of Sandino being moved to patriotism to continue his resistance, which has no foundation in fact, his reasons for sticking to his course are easily discerned. To give up his arms and return to his former mode of life would mean to labor in one of the mines probably; at present he is a little king, so to speak. Naturally the thought of giving up his present position to return to his former one does not appeal to him.