

# The Second Nicaraguan Campaign

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GENERAL MONCADA AND HIS JEFES

July, 1927

1. Moncada. 2. Escamilla. 3. Wassmer. 4. Plato. 5. Telles.  
6. Calders. 7. Sobalrano.

■ The Second Nicaraguan Campaign, officially included between the dates of August 27, 1926, and March 31, 1930, is in many ways unique among the various expeditions in which the Marine Corps has been engaged in recent years. In the first place, this was the type of military venture which may be termed an "intervention" as distinguished from an "occupation" such as the Haitian Campaign of 1915 or the Dominican Campaign of 1916. Armed conflict between the two political parties of the Nicaraguan People was fast degenerating from revolution into anarchy when the United States decided to intervene by landing its naval forces to protect foreign nationals and their property. There was no intention of occupying the country and setting up a military government as had been done on various occasions in the past. The American forces were in Nicaragua for the sole purpose of protecting persons and property from a state of disorder that was rapidly getting beyond the control of the duly constituted authorities. They were there to back up an official sent as the personal representative of the President of the United States to mediate between the warring factions. They remained there to supervise and insure a free and fair election when, after due deliberation, the Liberal and Conservative leaders decided that an election so guaranteed was preferable to the horrors of further bloodshed.

When the recalcitrant and stubborn jefe, Augustino Sandino, refused to obey the orders of his chief, General Jose Moncada, and turn in his arms in accordance with agreement, the Second Nicaraguan Campaign entered a phase that definitely distinguishes it from situations confronting the Marine Corps in the past. Whereas in Haiti or in Santo Domingo martial law was invoked and the military forces had a free hand to conduct such operations as were necessary to restore order; in Nicaragua the Second Brigade of Marines was compelled to initiate a campaign against Sandino in a section of the country where, openly or covertly, he was regarded as a national hero, and where there was no martial law in force to control the civilian population and assist the military in the prosecution and suppression of banditry. Again to distinguish this campaign from those in Cuba, Mexico,

Haiti, or Santo Domingo, the marines carried on their war against Sandino in an extraordinarily wild and remote region of Central America, situated more than a hundred miles from the railroad and their base of supplies. This was quite a different matter from operations conducted a few miles inland from coast towns, which usually distinguished the West Indian expeditions. Finally to mark this naval expedition from its predecessors, it was the first occasion since 1918 that the tremendous developments in aviation had been employed by an American expeditionary force under conditions of actual warfare.

For many months Sandino had been a thorn in the side of the Second Brigade when, on December 30, 1927, and again on New Year's Day, he ambushed two columns of marines that were attempting to form a junction at Quilali for the purpose of establishing a base from which to operate against his stronghold El Chipote. A number of marines and navy personnel were killed and wounded, with the result that the Eleventh Regiment, U. S. Marine Corps, was dispatched from the United States to Nicaragua as reinforcement. Pending the arrival of this regiment, every effort was made by the forces in Nicaragua to gain a decisive action with Sandino. These efforts met with considerable success for Sandino and about six hundred of his followers were bombed in his far famed defences on El Chipote by VO Aircraft Squadron 7M, under the personal command of Major Ross E. Rowell, U.S.M.C. His band was further scattered and harried by a provisional battalion of marines led by Major Archibald Young, U.S.M.C., which advanced up the slopes of El Chipote and drove the remnants of the outlaw's forces before them. This battalion completed the demolition of such of Sandino's defensive positions that had survived the bombs of Major Rowell's air attack. In February, 1928, Sandino disappeared for the time being into the wilderness south and east of Murra in order to gain a breathing spell and to gather together his demoralized bandits for continued deviltry.

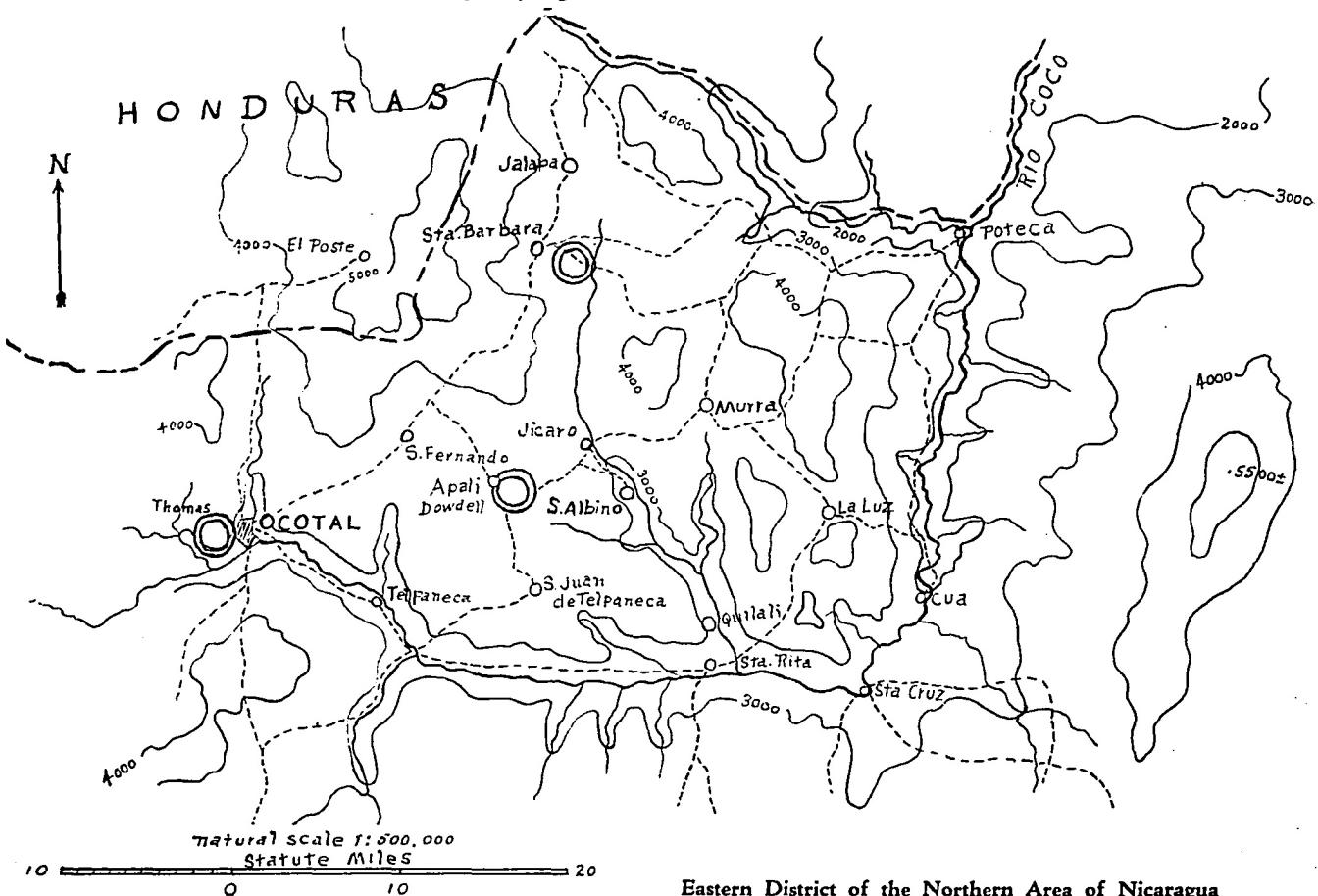
For purposes of tactical control western Nicaragua had been divided by a brigade order into the "Northern Area"

and the "Southern Area." The dividing line between the two areas ran generally from west to east through the towns Somotilla, Esteli, Jinotega, and Matiguas. The Fifth Regiment garrisoned the towns in both areas, but it was generally understood that when the Eleventh Regiment under Colonel Robert H. Dunlap, U.S.M.C., should arrive, it would relieve the detachments of the Fifth Regiment in the Northern Area, many of which had been in the hills for more than a year. Colonel Dunlap and his staff landed in Nicaragua in January, 1928, and proceeded almost immediately by plane to Ocotal, the headquarters of the Northern Area. Pending the arrival of his regiment this exceptionally able officer soon revealed his talents in the manner in which he employed the meagre forces then at his disposal to ferret Sandino from his hiding place. I was to have the privilege of participating in these operations for, on February 6, 1928, I received orders to proceed by plane to Ocotal and report for duty to the Commanding Officer, Northern Area. Colonel Dunlap directed me to relieve Major Young, then in command of the Eastern District of the Northern Area comprising the towns of Jalapa, Jicaro, San Albino, and Quilali. The northern outpost of this district was at Jalapa, in rolling, grassy, country close to the Honduran border. As the crow flies it lay twenty miles north of District Headquarters at San Albino, from where it could only be reached via the town of San Fernando, a distance by trail of forty miles. Jicaro was on the Rio Jicaro four miles northwest of San Albino. Quilali lay eighteen miles south of District Headquarters. The strength of the garrison at each of these towns varied, but the total force in the district averaged about 12 officers and 245 men.

East of this line of outposts stretched an unbroken wilderness of mountain, swamp, and tangled jungle, that

extended for one hundred and fifty miles to the Atlantic Ocean. Swift rivers flowing to the Atlantic drained it and formed the only paths through a country which was for the most part unmapped, unexplored, and inhabited by Indians many of whom had never seen a white man. It was a desolate, inhospitable region, and in the rainy season the streams roared through deep canyons or overflowed for miles into the heavy tropic undergrowth, making communication impossible by water. Such trails that existed were, for the better part of the year, sloughs, knee-deep in mud. Somewhere in this wilderness lurked Sandino, recovering from the blows struck him by Majors Rowell and Young. Our first task was to locate his hiding place. All sorts of rumors were rife. His foraging parties would be reported near Murra. Again they had been seen near Cua or San Juan de Telepaneca; but of the main band there was neither hide nor hair. The commands at Jalapa, Jicaro, San Albino, and Quilali repeatedly sent out patrols to investigate reports of bandit activities but drew blanks. However this patrolling was valuable in that it familiarized officers and men with the country, and enabled some excellent sketches to be secured of a region whose details did not appear on the maps. At San Albino Lieutenant Everett H. Clark, U.S.M.C., led many patrols. He was untiring in his efforts to secure information that might lead to a contact with Sandino. Speaking fair but very fluent Spanish, he pumped natives dry of any bandit intelligence they might possess. His sketches were clear and accurate and not random guesses of terrain which he had never traversed. Withal he was an energetic but a careful and clever leader on the trail, getting the maximum from his men but not bringing them in half-dead from exhaustion as sometimes occurred.

Aviation played a big part in all this preliminary work



Eastern District of the Northern Area of Nicaragua

and an even greater part when operations started. The pilots and observers were an intrepid lot. They gambled with death every time they flew across the area because east of Apali there was no bit of level ground large enough to bring a plane into in the event of a forced landing. Scarcely a day but what some plane did not circle over the hole in the mountains that was San Albino and "zoom" down over our signal station for a "pickup," or drop us the welcome news from outside, that let us realize there were other places in this world besides a God-forsaken, abandoned gold mine in the Nicaraguan bush.

The days passed and lengthened into weeks. An "R-2" estimate of the situation culled from various and sundry patrol reports and sketches turned in by both foot and air patrols, led to the belief that Sandino had established himself in a second Chipote located some miles to the east of his old stronghold, which camp he had named Bufona. One of his outposts, commanded by Colonel Coranado Maradiaga, was believed to be located at a place called by the Indians Division de Aguas, for the reason that the streams there flowed in opposite directions, some emptying east into the Rio Coco and others west into the Rio Jicaro. It did not take a great deal of imagination to figure out that the Division de Aguas was high country, probably a plateau or divide. There were bandit concentrations suspected also at places called Rempujon and Remango in the area east of Chipote. Lieutenant Clark had secured the information from one George Williams who lived at Las Encinas near Murra, that Sandino was getting his meat supply from the cattle country around Jalapa. Williams reported that during the month of February many head of beef had passed his ranch bound for the gateway at Murra into the little-known region to the south and east. Williams, who claimed British citizenship, had lived in Nicaragua for many years. He had once worked with Sandino when both were employed in the Butter's gold mine at San Albino. It was whispered that he was a deserter from the Royal Navy, years back; but at any rate he flew the British Jack over the ridge pole of his shanty and was never molested by the bandits. I will always believe that he played both sides in the game. His information, however, was usually dependable. This was about all the intelligence we had in regard to Sandino up until the morning of the nineteenth of March, when things began to pop.

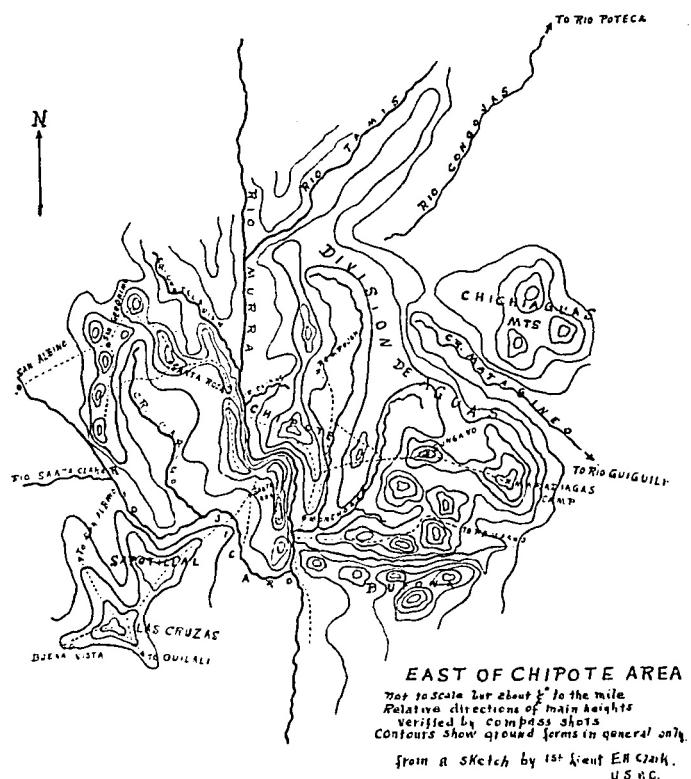
On that morning three of our planes scouting over Murra, observed a group of about one hundred and fifty bandits and dove for them with machine guns sputtering. The fight that followed lasted for most of the day. The planes were holed many times by the return fire of the bandits, and one of the pilots, Captain Pierce, was severely wounded. Numerous bandits were killed and maimed by bombs or machine gun fire and the planes made several trips to Ocotal and return to replenish ammunition. That evening we received a radio message from Colonel Dunlap directing the organization of a combat patrol of three officers and fifty men to proceed immediately to the vicinity of Murra and clear this area of bandits. At 8:30 p. m. Lieutenant Clark and I with thirty-one men left San Albino for Jicaro to pick up the balance of the patrol. We rapidly covered the four miles of trail that meanders along the eastern edge of the Jicaro River Valley. Notified by field telephone of our departure, Lieutenant Potter was waiting when we debouched into the town. The patrol was soon organized as directed in orders, three officers and fifty men. It was adequately armed with one Browning automatic rifle and one Thompson sub-machine gun with the initial allowance

of ammunition to a squad. All officers were mounted and a pack train of seven animals carried five days' rations for the patrol. At eleven o'clock the last mule emitted his protesting grunt and we filed out of the sleeping village heading east on the Jicaro-Sabana Largo bull-cart trail. This trail rises almost imperceptibly until at Piela Cuesta it follows a mountain ridge three or four thousand feet above sea level. After the first inevitable halts to adjust the animals' packs the march was uninterrupted. Hour succeeded hour until at last in the eyrie light of early morning we halted on the crest of a pine clad ridge. Our guide said that it was not far now to Murra. The patrol rested awhile on the soft pine needles then began the descent. A mile from Murra the trail dips down abruptly and winds through a very narrow, heavily wooded, gorge. Murra lies at the bottom of a deep crater like valley whose sides rise at an angle of forty-five degrees to a rim one thousand feet above its red-tiled roofs. From the hill tops the scene was alluring but closer inspection revealed a looted and deserted village, its doors smashed in or sagging drunkenly. While a sentry stood guard on a knoll near the center of town the patrol busied itself in preparations for breakfast. Many of the men were too tired to eat and lay huddled asleep beside the fires. The clatter of an automatic rifle sounded their reveille. When we arrived panting at the side of the sentry its echoes had scarcely died away. The man said that he had fired at two mounted natives, armed with rifles and dressed in khaki, who had ridden into town from the east. Clark spent an hour combing the hillside with no result. An excellent mule bearing the brand "J.H.C." of Colonel Juan Colindres, one of Sandino's jefes, was captured. Breakfast was over when from the south came the drone of an airplane and the following message was dropped on the hillside where our panel signals lay ready for use. "To C. O. patrol. We hit a bunch of about 150, S. E. of Murra yesterday. Will tell you later location of the Jalapa patrol. (s/g Chappell)." At ten twenty the plane circled back with another message. "To Major Gray. The area to the S. E. of Murra about two miles looks suspicious but we can't locate anything. That is where we hit them yesterday and we notice a bunch of buzzards. (s/g Chappell)." Again, at ten fifty, a third message was dropped. "To Major Gray. The patrol from Jalapa is now at Terrerios. So far we can't locate anything. (s/g Chappell)." At this time I could see large flocks of buzzards circling over the Plantel and Patrarras sections north and south of Murra, which the planes then strafing these areas had kicked up. Plantel lay between the Jalapa and San Albino patrols so I decided to move north and attempt to corner any bandit groups still in the Plantel section between the converging columns. Accordingly I notified the planes by panel signal that I was moving north and at one thirty we cleared Murra, marching up the left side of a deep and narrow valley. When two miles north of Murra, our point observed an armed native watching the column from across the valley. We gave him a burst from an automatic rifle, and he disappeared. At this time a plane came over and dropped a message from the Area Commander directing that patrols return to their home stations when satisfied that the area was clear. We reconnoitered Plantel. The trail north from this section climbs out of the valley up a mountain ridge covered with a heavy growth of giant fern. Two air bombs had registered on the trail. This mountain ridge ran due west to Las Encinas. On the far side of the ridge from Plantel was the section called

Oakland. Here we destroyed one-half of a case of dynamite and fifty feet of time fuse found in a native house. It was four o'clock in the afternoon and the patrol had marched twenty-three miles across difficult country since eleven o'clock of the night before. I decided to make camp at Oakland.

The following morning while preparing to break camp we distinctly heard the sounds of two Stokes mortar bombs and machine gun fire from the direction of Las Encinas. As we cleared Oakland, headed west along the mountain ridge towards Las Encinas, a native bomb signal was fired from a hill in rear of our camp of the night before. The Sandinistas frequently employed bomb signals preparatory to executing an ambush. The patrol was particularly on the alert as it advanced along the ridge trail which for the first five miles passed through a dense hardwood forest. This vigilance was rewarded when the point detected an armed native on the trail ahead who slipped into the underbrush, but not before his movements had been accelerated by a lacing from a Thompson sub-machine gun. The patrol arrived at Las Encinas at three o'clock in the afternoon where it was joined by the Jalapa patrol under the command of Marine Gunner Jenkins. Jenkins reported that he had camped the previous night at Murra and that while passing through Mine America at ten thirty that morning had encountered a group of ten bandits three of whom he had killed the remainder escaping. The Jalapa patrol continued the return march to its home station while we accepted the hospitality of George Williams for the night at Las Encinas. On the afternoon of the fourth day of our departure we arrived in camp at San Albino.

The two weeks immediately following this patrolling of the Murra area were extremely busy ones in the Eastern District. For some time "scuttle butt" rumors to the effect that the Area Commander was planning a concerted drive into the region east of Chipote had circulated. These were strengthening when we received orders to put ten days' rations for two hundred men into Quilali by the fifth of April. Jalapa, Jicaro, and San Albino, were supplied direct from Ocotal by bull-cart train. Quilali was supplied by pack train from stocks accumulated at San Albino. For the next two weeks Lieutenant Thomas J. Kilcourse, U.S.M.C., who was my Adjutant, Quartermaster, Mess Officer, and Post Exchange Officer, was busy night and day checking the stores that rumbled into camp from Ocotal in long, slow-moving, bull-cart caravans, and in making up pack trains and starting them off under escort to Quilali, eighteen miles to the south of us. There were innumerable details to care for. Equipment was overhauled and put in the best possible condition. Automatic weapons, of which there were a limited number in the Eastern District, were redistributed. Pack gear for the transportation of heavy Browning machine guns and Stokes mortars, with their ammunition, must be devised and constructed. An extra field wireless set was received from Ocotal and our ingenuity was taxed to provide safe but practical pack equipment for its transportation on the march. On April third the long expected field orders were received at District Headquarters. These orders directed the departure from home stations of three columns of troops, to form a junction at Monchones, east of Chipote, at a base to be established by the San Albino column. A fourth column of mounted troops was directed to operate along the Rio Coco as far down as Guiguili, then to strike west and cooperate with the foot troops. The Jalapa column of two officers and seventy-five men under the command of Lieutenant H. N. Ken-



yon, U.S.M.C., had the longest distance to go and cleared Jalapa on April fourth, marching via the Las Encinas-Murra-San Pedro trail. The San Albino column of three officers and seventy-seven men which I commanded, marched on April fifth via the San Geronomo-Santa Rosa trail. Having the shortest distance to go, we were to establish the base camp at Monchones. The Quilali column of two officers and sixty men under the command of Captain Arthur Kingston, U.S.M.C., marched north from its home station to reconnoiter the reported Bufona outpost of Sandino, supposed to lie somewhere east of Chipote. The Guiguili column of two officers and sixty horse-marines under the command of Captain Maurice G. Holmes, U.S.M.C., who was more at home in the saddle than most cavalry officers, cleared Quilali on April fourth, marching down the left bank of the Rio Coco towards Guiguili. These columns were assigned various objectives, but in general, the idea was to thoroughly comb the little known region east of Chipote, killing or capturing all bandits encountered and destroying all bandit food supplies and material found. After accomplishing their respective missions all columns were to rendezvous at the Monchones base, after which, the Senior Officer present was to conduct such operations as the situation warranted or the Area Commander might direct. Holy Week was selected as the period in which this plan was to be executed. It was my personal opinion that Holy Week was not the best time for a drive for the reason that, in Nicaragua, this week is the most important church festival of the entire year and from the President down to the lowliest "mozo" it is universally observed. Work ceases and the people return to their homes from far distant points to feast and celebrate. Even Sandino's bandits and home affiliations and I believed that we would find many of his followers absent when we entered the area in which he was hiding.

I have not the ability to adequately picture the diffi-

culties and hardships experienced by officers and men in the days that followed our "jump-off." Night patrols across the roughest parts of a terrain notoriously difficult, with no accurate maps to work with and the mental strain of possible ambush always in mind made this a real test for all hands. The following account of our experiences may in some measure reveal the problems that arise in bush warfare when widely separated columns operate in accordance with a prearranged plan in unknown and unmapped country similar to this section of Nicaragua. The San Albino column was organized with a strength of three officers and seventy-seven men, including one hospital corpsman U. S. Navy. It was armed with one Browning automatic rifle and one Thompson sub-machine gun to the squad. Rifle and hand grenades were carried by each squad. One heavy Browning machine gun, one Stokes mortar, and a field radio set accompanied the column. There were forty-four pack mules in the train which, besides reserve ammunition carried ten days' rations for eighty men. All officers were mounted. This detachment cleared camp at six o'clock in the evening of April fifth. It forded the Jicaro river below the mine buildings and began the long climb to the high mountain ridges which encircle San Albino. Lieutenant Clark with two squads in the advance guard led the formation. I followed with the main body and lieutenant Potter with two squads in the rear guard trailed the pack train. As we were obliged to march in single file, this was an unwieldy column and difficult to keep closed up in the dark. The men however, had been well indoctrinated in march discipline on many night patrols in these hills and I doubt that an observer fifty feet off the trail would have detected the column as it slowly wound its way into the mountains. The trail entered the San Geronimo section, a collection of silent, deserted houses. At eleven o'clock while the advance guard was passing through the Santa Rosa area, from far below in the valley on our left came the sound of automatic weapons firing. This I estimated was from the Jalapa column reconnoitering San Pedro, which supposition Lieutenant Kenyon confirmed when he joined me at Monchones. A short distance south of Santa Rosa the trail forks. The left fork leaves the ridge and entering the Murra valley crosses the Murra river and passes over the west slope of Chipote down into Monchones. The right fork continues south along the ridge parallel to the Murra river until this ridge gradually sloughs off to an end at the Jicaro river, opposite the north slope of Sapotillal mountain. From this point Monchones must be reached by following the bed of the Jicaro river down to its junction with the Murra river, then up the left bank of this river for one mile. The right fork is much the longer of the two routes but my guide assured me that the left fork trail over Chipote was too steep for our pack train, heavily laden as it was, to negotiate. When some days later I had to use this trail I was glad that I had taken his advice. All that night we forced our way down the ridge. The trail had been little used for a long time and was overgrown with brush. We reached the Jicaro river at daylight, pretty much all in. One of the pack animals died at this time and the muleros had their hands full keeping the exhausted animals from lying down. I gave the column a short rest, then we moved on, threading our way among the boulders of the Jicaro river bed until we finally arrived where it joined with the Murra. At eleven o'clock we reached Monchones and established the base camp on the south

slope of Chipote mountain. The camp was located on a ledge fifty feet above Monchones creek which insured an excellent supply of water. There was a protrero with a limited amount of cane forage nearby. The strategic location of the base may be appreciated when its position with reference to the suspected bandit concentrations at Division de Aguas and Remango is studied. The remainder of our first day in camp was occupied in resting and in preparations for the night patrol work which was to follow.

Clark and I rolled from our blankets in the cold damp of early morning and assembled the combat patrol of forty men, detailed the night before, who were sleeping together at one end of camp. We forded Monchones creek in the dark and in single file marched north east up the side of a mountain which had betrayed indication of bandit presence on the afternoon of our arrival at Monchones. It was light enough to see all members of the patrol in single file formation on the trail when we reached the top of the mountain. I halted the patrol about one hundred yards from a comparatively large and well constructed house which stood in the edge of a coffee grove. The advance guard crept forward to reconnoiter. As it entered the yard which surrounded this building two shots were fired from the edge of the coffee planting. One bullet struck close to Clark who was leading the point. It ricocheted over the patrol which deployed and advanced into the grove on the double. We found a well marked trail leading back from the house through the coffee bushes. This trail was cleverly enfiladed at several points by means of lanes cut through the coffee across which rifle rests of notched logs were laid. Some distance down the trail we came to a house concealed in the trees. It was roughly prepared for defence with a parapet of notched logs around all four sides. The coffee grove covered the top of the mountain and it was thoroughly searched without finding any trace of the men who had fired on the patrol. On the eastern face of the mountain we searched a house in which was found a U. S. Engineer Corps prismatic compass, numbered 27896, 1918. Members of the patrol identified it as belonging to the late Lieutenant Bruce, Guardia Nacional, who was killed in January at Sapotillal in the ambush of Lieutenant Richal's column. The house in which the compass was found overlooked a deep, wooded valley. Across the valley rose Bufona mountain. At seven thirty we heard the sounds of machine gun fire and rifle grenades from the far side of Bufona. I figured that this firing was from the Quilali column reconnoitering Remango, which Captain Kingston confirmed when he arrived at Monchones. After a last search through the coffee grove and the destruction of all potential bandit shelter we returned to the base camp for food and rest. On the way back to camp a plane passed over our patrol and acknowledged our identification panels. We tried without success to communicate by radio with Ocotal and other radio stations but it was not until the morning of April ninth that the operator got our field set to function. On the night of April seventh Clark and I with a patrol of thirty-five men marched north east from Monchones in search of the alleged bandit concentration in the Division de Aguas area. The trail after leaving camp followed along the southern and eastern slopes of Chipote then through extremely rugged country across the headwaters of the Creek de Oro and Creek Sungano. I rode a mule on this patrol and there were times when I thought that I might have to aban-

don the animal. We left the trail and scrambled across country, wading along stream beds and climbing hillsides which would have tested the activity of a goat. Our guide was a native boy who had been held prisoner by Coronado Maradiaga in his camp at Division de Aguas. We had left Monchones at dark and it was two thirty in the morning when we arrived at the foot of the lofty divide which is the Division de Aguas. Our guide knew the position of the "reten" or outpost that guarded the only approach to Maradiaga's camp. We surrounded the position and closed in. Fires still smoldering but it was empty. I decided to wait until it grew light enough to pick up a target before advancing on the main camp. Day was approaching as we left the reten by a trail leading up the divide. It was five thirty when the patrol crawled into position about a group of shacks at the very end of the ridge. The camp was deserted. We made coffee and waited for sunrise in a house which our guide said had been Maradiaga's headquarters. It was an eagle's nest, near the edge of a cliff that dropped off sheer for hundreds of feet to the valley floor below. West across the valley was Rempujon another reputed bandit outpost and to the east was Remango. Maradiaga's camp had been vacated in a hurry and all manner of worthless trash lay scattered about. Apparently the former occupants had no intention of returning in a hurry. The patrol thoroughly reconnoitered the area at sunrise, but though our guide stated that Maradiaga's band averaged about forty men none were encountered. While returning to camp firing was heard west across the valley from Division de Aguas. This was from the Jalapa column patrolling Rempujon. On the afternoon of April eighth the columns of Captain Kingston and Lieutenant Kenyon arrived in camp. Both of these officers had thoroughly covered the objectives assigned in their orders with much the same results that the San Albino patrols had experienced. The few bandits encountered were stragglers from the main bands whose whereabouts we were as ignorant of as before the drive started. We felt quite certain of one fact, that the area east of Chipote had been evacuated by Sandino. This negative information was transmitted to Ocotal with the request for further instructions and on the morning of April ninth orders were received by plane drop for all columns to return to their home stations.

Although the results obtained by this drive were in the main disappointing, a large quantity of Sandino's food stores which he had been industriously collecting and hoarding for the approaching rainy season were captured and destroyed. A few days after our return to San Albino the following message was received from the Area Commander:

FROM: AREA COMMANDER OCOTAL 4-13-28  
 TO : C. O. MARINES SAN ALBINO  
 1113 FOR MAJOR GRAY STOP PLEASE  
 EXPRESS TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF  
 THE SAN ALBINO COLUMN MY THANKS  
 AND APPRECIATION OF THE EXCELLENT  
 WORK DONE BY THEM DURING THE RE-  
 CENT OPERATIONS STOP DUNLAP 1630  
 COPY TO: JICARO APALI

This message more than recompensed us for any privation or discomfort experienced during the recent drive. All columns that were engaged in the operation received a similar message from Colonel Dunlap. The Major General Commandant, Major General John A. Lejeune, U.S.M.C., saw fit to mention it in his Annual Report to

the Secretary of the Navy the following December. It was now quite evident that western Nicaragua had grown much too active to suit Sandino. As we marched on April fifth into the country east of Chipote he started on his long trek of one hundred and fifty miles through the jungle to the east coast via the Coco River Route. The blows dealt him by Majors Rowell and Young in January and this recent descent into his retreat had decided him to look for easier pickings where marines were less numerous. So within a few weeks we were to hear of the destruction of the Pis Pis mines in eastern Nicaragua and in the months that followed to learn with pride of the fine work of Captain Edson and the aviation units who drove the bandit leader back to his old haunts and finally forced him to flee the country.

The time was now near for the Eleventh Regiment to take over the Northern Area from the Fifth Marines. About April fifteenth a battalion of the Eleventh Regiment under the command of Major Keller E. Rockey, U.S.M.C., arrived at San Albino. My orders were to turn over the Eastern District of the Northern Area to Major Rockey, and when the order to "execute" was received, to proceed by marching to Jinotega, via Quilali, Cua, Plantasma Valley, and Guale Pass. On the afternoon of April 22, 1928, the orders came to evacuate Fifth Regiment troops from the Northern Area. The march south was a comparatively leisurely affair on which we averaged fifteen miles a day. It covered the same ground passed over by Captain Livingston just four months before. Whereas Livingston's column encumbered with a pack train of two hundred and fifty animals labored for two weeks through mud literally knee deep, the trails now were dry and marching was a pleasure. We spent the first night at Quilali where Captain Kingston joined us with his detachment. The Eleventh Regiment relief commanding officer at Quilali was Captain Hunter. A few weeks later he died a lingering death in a contact with bandits east of Cua. My Adjutant, Lieutenant Kilcourse, had made the march with Captain Livingston from Matagalpa to Quilali. He showed us the spot where Sandino had ambushed the column, killing or wounding from fifteen to twenty officers and men. Our march south was uneventful and at noon on the fifth day after leaving San Albino we arrived at Jinotega, where I turned over my detachment of six officers and one hundred and fifty two men. Fourteen months later, ten of which having been spent very pleasantly in command of the Third Battalion of the Fifth Regiment at Matagalpa, I watched the volcanic peaks and cones of this turbulent country drop below the horizon from the deck of the *S. S. Colombia*. At Port Limon in Costa Rica several commercial travelers joined the ship. One of these men reported to me, most confidentially, that he had seen Sandino accompanied by members of his personal staff, in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, ten days earlier, and that Sandino was enroute to Mexico to seek asylum until he could recoup his finances for continued operations against the marines in Nicaragua. At present writing, more than three years later, Sandino is still at large and recent newspaper reports have it that he is once more roaming the jungles of his old haunts. He will find no marines to oppose him now. But his life will not be entirely one of loot, and rape, and murder; for the *Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua* trained by United States Marines, has taken up the work once the duty of the Second Brigade, U.S.M.C., and is fighting the old battle against bandits and banditry which will always be a problem in this unfortunate country.