THE COCO PATROL

Operations of a Marine Patrol Along the Coco River in Nicaragua, 1928-1929

SECTION IV—THE ADVANCE TO POTECA

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■ Puerto Cabezas and the Eastern Area had continued to grow during the time that the *Denver* Detachment had been in the hills.

Additional barracks had been erected or were in process of construction to a total number of five. A two-story hospital was nearing completion. The Area Quartermaster had a large and well stocked storeroom. A post exchange had been established and the exchange building and recreation room was almost finished. Plans were under way for the erection of a radio shack and a new headquarters building was projected.

The single music boy who had accompanied Major Utley to Bluefields in February was no longer an adequate staff to care for the increased activities in the Area. The duties of A-1 and Post Exchange Officer were being handled by Lieutenant Ralph B. DeWitt until such time as he assumed command of the *Denver* Detachment and went into the hills. Lieutenant W. Carvel Hall functioned as A-2, A-3 and Communications Officer. Lieutenant George W. Shearer had been relieved from duty with the 51st Company and was Area Paymaster, Area Quartermaster and A-4, assisted by Pay Clerk John J. Reidy and Quartermaster Clerk James M. Fountain. A medical staff of three medical officers and a dental officer were on duty. A mile and a half from the center of the settlement was the aviation field. Captain Euvelle D. Howard, Lieutenant Vernon M. Guymon and Lieutenant William W. Conway were the attached aviators. A hangar which housed three OL-8 amphibian planes was already completed; an office building and enlisted quarters were under construction; and the field itself was being drained and improved. All this seemed a far cry from the day we had landed only four months before.

Instead of the few coastal outposts which had existed in February, the Eastern Area "grew and it grew"[18] until it already included nearly half of Nicaragua. The *Tulsa* Detachment, one platoon of the 59th Company, attached units from the 51st Company and numerous casuals were at Puerto Cabezas. The southern sector around Bluefields was garrisoned by the 51st Company under Captain Donald J. Kendall with outposts at El Gallo, Rama and San Juan del Norte. The 60th Company occupied the mining area with its westernmost outpost at Cuvali. Bocay was garrisoned by Captain Walker and a platoon of the 59th Company, while the *Galveston* Detachment occupied outposts at Raiti, Awawas and Waspuc.

Between these outposts and the easternmost garrison of the Northern and Southern Areas in western Nicaragua, there was a strip of wild, jungle territory, some 150 miles wide, free from Marine patrols and well enough inhabited to provide Sandino's outlaws with food. It was into this section that the bandits had moved.

On the morning of June twenty-eighth, 1928, the USS *Rochester* dropped anchor off Puerto Cabezas. Major Utley immediately went on board. He returned shortly before noon, accompanied by Admiral Sellers, Commander of the Special Service Squadron; General Logan Feland, Commanding the 2nd Marine Brigade, and Captain Harry A. Baldridge, Commanding Officer of the *Rochester*.

As I saluted General Feland, he said to me, "Major Utley tells me that you would like to go to Poteca. Can you get there from this coast?"

After the messages which I had sent from Bocay and the numerous talks I had had with the Major on this subject, there could be only one answer. "Yes, sir; it can be done."

"Well, I am going to give you the chance to do it."

That was the beginning of the *Coco* Patrol.

In about fifteen minutes that afternoon, I reported in accordance with my orders to Captain Baldridge for duty as Commanding Officer of the Marine Detachment of the *Rochester;* then to General Feland for duty ashore in Nicaragua with the 2nd Brigade; and finally to Major Utley for temporary duty in the Eastern Area.

General Feland told us that recent airplane reconnaissance and other information definitely located the outlaw concentration around Poteca. They had raided that place on June fifteenth. On the twelfth, "Altimirano raided a lumber camp on the Poteca River eight miles from the junction of the Coco River. The owner, a German, was warned not to continue operations without the consent of Sandino."[19] Marine forces from the Northern Area reported that there were no trails leading into the Poteca sector from the west and that their patrols were unable to reach that place.

Steps were already being taken to organize the various departments and precincts of Nicaragua preparatory to supervising the Presidential elections to be held in November. It was essential that the bandit force be eliminated or dispersed into such small groups that it could not effectively interfere with the conduct of the free and fair election which the United States had promised to conduct. If Sandino were left unmolested for the next four months to recuperate, to recruit his forces and to perfect his organization, it was conceivable that he might be in a position to add serious difficulties to the fulfillment of this promise in so far as the Departments of Nueva Segovia, Jinotega and Matagalpa were concerned.

The Northern Area had stated that they could not get into Poteca. We of the Eastern Area said that we could, in spite of the rainy season, lack of trails, difficulties of supply and transportation and the much greater distances to be traveled. Previous instructions regarding the stabilization of the area were modified and Major Utley was ordered to organize a patrol to be placed under my command which would proceed up the Coco River with Poteca and Santa Cruz as objectives. Poteca was to be occupied as soon after August first as possible. Air support and supply would

[18] EASTERN AREA Song:
"Oh, the Eastern Area grew and it grew, hablas tu;
Oh, the Eastern Area grew and it grew, hablas tu,
Oh, the Eastern Area grew and it grew,
No one knows what it's coming to,
Hinky, dinky, hablas tu."

[19] Page 204, The Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. XIII, No. 3, September, 1928.

come from the Eastern Area. Cooperation would be given by the Northern and Southern Areas in that patrols from Jalapa, San Albino, Quilali and Jinotega would be ordered to operate early in August to the east of the Rio Jicaro and in the vicinity of Santa Cruz, where I would establish liaison with them. Such was the plan agreed upon.

Late in the afternoon of the twenty-ninth of June, the *Rochester* weighed anchor and steamed for the Canal Zone and Corinto. Although officially attached to her complement, I had yet to set foot on her deck. A whole year was to pass before I would go aboard to take command of her Marine Detachment.

A few days later, Eastern Area Field Order Number 4 was issued organizing the Coco Patrol. It assigned troops and officers thereto, and defined the mission "to proceed up the Coco River, to drive the bandits from the river valley, destroying such groups as it might encounter, to take and hold Poteca, and to continue the movement southwest from that place to form a junction with patrols from the Northern Area in the vicinity of Santa Cruz."[20] The Marine Detachment from the USS *Denver* under Lieutenant DeWitt, that from the USS *Galveston* under Lieutenant Cook, attached from the 51st Company, and two hospital corpsmen attached from the 51st Company made up the patrol; a total paper strength of 3 officers, 87 enlisted Marines and 2 enlisted Navy.

The magnitude of the task confronting us can be partially visualized by studying the map of Nicaragua and by considering the situation as it existed at that time.

Poteca, the initial objective, was more than four hundred miles from Cape Gracias, and at least four hundred seventy-five miles from our base at Puerto Cabezas as compared to a maximum of sixty miles from the Jicaro River line of the Northern Area. If we could make good the daily average of fifteen miles which I believed possible, the movement would require thirty days as compared to the maximum of four days from Quilali or San Albino. Even if we assumed that Bocay was our jump-off point, the distance to be traversed was at least two and a half times as great as from the eastern outposts of the Northern Area, upstream, through unknown terrain, in the very height of the rainy season.

Our information indicated that all of the organized outlaw force who owed direct allegiance to Sandino was concentrated in the Poteca area, an estimated total of about four hundred men. Outside of the fact that Gulkes Camp, up the Poteca River, and Poteca itself were occupied, we had no knowledge of the actual bandit dispositions.

As I have said before, there were no Marine garrisons between Bocay and Quilali. When we left Bocay we would have with us all the men who could be spared from the Eastern Area forces, as well as all available transportation, so no reënforcements could be expected from our rear. The Northern Area had already stated that it was impossible for their troops to penetrate to Poteca from the west. We could therefore expect no help from friendly forces in the field. Munitions, provisions and supplies must be taken in sufficient quantity to last during our move to Poteca and Santa Cruz plus the time necessary for our supply train to drop down river, refill and return. No portable radio set was available for our use. Communications would be confined to airplane liaison which, because of the rainy season, would be most irregular. Once the patrol left Bocay, it must become a self-contained, self-supporting combat patrol, entirely dependent upon its own resources for its success or failure.

There was practically no choice as to the route to be followed. Conditions had changed materially since the first of June. The heavy rains then in full sway had already converted such trails as did exist above Bocay into seas of mud or had entirely drowned them out where they followed the stream bottoms. The idea of using pack trains and proceeding overland was abandoned. The river itself offered the most natural route. We were familiar with the terrain as far as Bocay. Above that point, our information indicated that, except for two or three rapids which would require portage, there were no insurmountable difficulties to transportation. The river was a definite route for the evacuation of sick and wounded, if any, and offered a positive route of communications with the Eastern Area. The chief disadvantages to its use were the unusual difficulties to navigation because of the season of the year; the fact that once contact was made with the bandit force our route and means of approach would be definitely known; and that our operations in the field would be limited in area to within supporting distance of our boat train.

The first difficulty to be solved was that of collecting the troops which made up the Coco Patrol into one group, a task which was not completed until the middle of September. On June twenty-fourth, Lieutenant DeWitt, with about half of the *Denver* Detachment, had left Puerto Cabezas for Waspuc as a relief for the *Galveston* Detachment, which was scheduled to return to the coast for a short rest period. As soon as the Coco Patrol was conceived, DeWitt was ordered to Bocay with his detail and the move of the *Galveston* Detachment to Puerto Cabezas was cancelled. Cloth-

[20]Field Order No. 4, Eastern Area, Puerto Cabezas, Nic.

ing and equipment necessary to refit this detachment were ferried to Waspuc by plane and distributed from there to their various detached posts. On the second of July, the remainder of the *Denver* Detachment left Puerto Cabezas for Waspuc and Bocay, and on the seventh of the month, an additional platoon of the 59th Company moved out to replace the *Galveston* personnel station at Waspuc and Awawas and Raiti. Orders were issued for each increment to move to Bocay, which was designated the assembly and jump-off point, as rapidly as transportation became available. July twenty-third was tentatively selected as "D" day, allowing ten days for the advance from Bocay to Poteca.

The plan was to organize the patrol into two platoons of five squads each, plus a headquarters group. Each platoon would consist of one of the ship's detachments, under its respective detachment commander, the headquarters group to be made up of the acting first sergeant, runners, cooks, hospital corpsmen, et cetera, assigned from each of the two detachments.

It was definitely decided to use such native boats as existed along the river for our boat train. Navy boats were too heavy; they drew too much water; and they were too slow and awkward to handle in the swift waters of the upper river. Except for two or three fabricated boats in the vicinity of Cape Gracias, all those on the river were of the ordinary dugout type, hewn out of one single cedar or mahogany log. They were light in weight; easy to handle on the water or to portage; very responsive to pole or paddle; strong, sturdy and almost indestructible; and, most important of all, unsinkable. They might swamp or capsize, but they would invariably roll over and float to the top.

The standard river boat was the pitpan, a single dugout type, approximately thirty-five feet long and thirty to thirty-six inches wide. The mahogany boat was stronger and more desirable than that made of cedar although it was not so slight nor so easily made. The average sized pitpan required at least one month to build. These boats had a carrying capacity of one full squad, sitting one behind the other, with their packs and emergency rations, besides the ordinary boat crew of three or four bowmen and the boat captain. When loaded to capacity, they have a free board of only three or four inches. A day's ride in one of them was a tedious affair. Due to the small free board and their inherent instability, the passengers were limited as to movement and were forced to sit on their pack seats in an almost upright position from start to finish of the day's journey. Because of its size and the fact that it carried a single tactical unit, the squad, the pitpan was the most satisfactory of the river craft from the viewpoint of a combat patrol.

The pipanti was a small edition of the pitpan, with a carrying capacity of four or less men, besides its crew of two or three bowmen and the boat captain. This craft was used primarily for the advanced guard and rear guard units of half squads each, and was only utilized for the main body when other larger craft was not available.

A third type of poling boat was the bateau. The hull of this boat was a large pitpan, strengthened by ribs which extended above the sides and to which were added wooden strips. These increased the free-board, thus adding to the carrying capacity of the boat. They were used primarily for cargo craft, although troops were often carried in them. As a combat boat, they had the distinct disadvantage of placing too many men in a small compact group which presented a large and easily found target. The largest bateau on the river required a crew of eleven bowmen and two boat captains and had a capacity of about 7,500 pounds.

By the simple expedient of fastening a strong piece of two by four to the stern of these various types of boats with three or four bolts, they were converted into motor propelled craft by attaching one or, in the case of the larger bateaux, two Johnson outboard motors to this piece. Changing the pitpan into the cayuga, as was common practice around Bluefields, by cutting off and squaring up the stern for the attachment of the outboard motor was not necessary and was never done along the Coco River.

The number of boats suitable to our needs was limited. Three of the largest and best bateaux had been taken up river by Aguerro during his raid of Sang Sang in April and were not available. If every suitable boat between Bocay and Cape Gracias was commandeered, there would be scarcely enough to carry the entire patrol. To utilize them for this purpose alone would be suicidal. It was essential that Bocay, already under-rationed, be supplied with food and that a surplus be built up at that place which could, in turn, be forwarded to my patrol once it had obtained its objectives. This required transportation. A compromise had to be effected as to how many and what boats should be kept by me and which would be released for the transportation of supplies and replacements. The movement of every man towards the upper river meant that a corresponding amount of supplies had to be provided and transported for him. One could already foresee the three months' struggle which was to exist between the needs of troop transport and supply transport.

The use of outboard motors for the patrol was considered and rejected. They made too much noise to be of practical use with a combat patrol. With them, our exact position would have been positively known two or three miles in advance during the entire movement, so that the bandit forces we would undoubtedly meet could lie in wait in ambush or could run away from us with an absolute knowledge of our every movement. Because of the constant exposure to heavy rains and moisture, they were apt to prove unreliable at just the moment when they were most badly needed. They could not be trusted in negotiating the large rapids which we had to pass through. And they consumed an enormous amount of fuel. It was estimated that the gasoline and oil supply needed to make the move to Santa Cruz would require more space than our supplies and equipment combined. If outboard motors were used, we would have to sacrifice valuable space needed for the much more necessary rations.

As in my previous move up the Waspuc in May, and for the same reasons as existed then, the use of Marine boatmen was rejected. I decided to depend upon my friendship with and knowledge of the Indians along the river to provide me with the necessary native boatmen. I felt that the time and effort spent during the previous four months in cultivating the good will of these people would now be repaid.

Once again I was confronted with the need of competent guides and interpreters. Once again, I found it impossible to locate any man who was acquainted with the river as far as Poteca and Santa Cruz and who was able to speak intelligently English, Miskita and Spanish, all three languages being required. I finally selected

Arthur Kittle, whose knowledge of woodcraft, the river country, and the Miskita Indian would be invaluable even though he had never been farther west than Bocay; and Augustine Garcia, half Indian, half Spaniard, who had been with Moncada's revolutionary army in its move from Puerto Cabezas to Jinotega, who had been a guide with Captain Linscott in his move to Bocay, and who had a working knowledge of the three languages required, although he, too, had never been along the Coco River above Bocay.

The question of armament and munitions was an easy one. Each squad was armed with six rifles, one Browning Automatic Rifle and one Thompson sub-machine gun. The Thompson was given to the best qualified private or private first class in the squad who was assigned as number three of the front rank. Squad leaders carried rifles, not the Thompson. Section leaders, platoon leaders and the patrol leader were armed only with the automatic pistol, as were the designated runners, one for each platoon. Two native machetes per squad and a few extra distributed among the section leaders were carried as regular equipment. There were no rifle or hand grenades or any grenade dischargers available in the Eastern Area, so none were carried. The only ammunition on the East Coast was the wartime vintage 150-grain Model 1906, which had been landed from the ships of the Special Service Squadron. There was none of the new M-1 which was being used on the west coast of Nicaragua. Machine guns were considered but were rejected for the initial move up the river. They were too heavy and cumbersome to accompany shore patrols which had no pack train, nor did I consider them an effective weapon against a well hidden ambush in the close terrain through which we were to pass. They could not be mounted to advantage in poling boats of the pitpan type. I had no intention of engaging in a fire fight between a flotilla of open boats in midstream and a concealed bandit shore position. Their weight and bulk would decrease the number of men and supplies which could be carried. Their sole use would have been as a defensive weapon with the boat train while shore patrols were operating at a distance to the front or flank. I decided that the disadvantages of carrying the weapon offset any tactical advantage to be gained and did not carry them. Were I given a similar mission again, I believe that I would carry two Lewis guns for defensive use in case of necessity; not as an offensive weapon under the conditions which existed on this patrol.

In order to provide as much room in the boats as possible for the essential rations, individual clothing carried by each man was reduced to the very minimum. Besides that actually worn, one complete change of clothing was carried, one pair of shoes, as many pairs of socks as each man wished above four, and two blankets. Haversacks and pack carriers were left at Puerto Cabezas. If shore patrols became necessary, blanket shoulder rolls would be used. Rolls were made with the poncho. Shelter halves were left behind. Experience had taught us that leaf lean-tos could be built in about ten or fifteen minutes and that they were actually more waterproof and more comfortable than shelter tents. These shacks were made of a framework of young saplings bound together with vines or bamboo bush, faced to leeward from the rain or prevailing wind, and covered with manaca or banana leaves. Manaca leaves, being tougher, more closely fabricated, and more durable, were used whenever they could be found. A well built manaca leaf lean-to would shed the heaviest rains for three or four weeks before the leaves had to be renewed; banana leaves had to be replaced every week or ten days. Toilet articles were limited to soap, tooth brushes and tooth paste. Razors and shaving accessories were abandoned. Such men as could afford them purchased laced boots to be worn in place of the issue shoe. No canvas leggins were worn or taken. A few of the men bought the native rubber covered sack for their duffel, and there were a few hammocks carried, although their use was never general in my patrol. Once again, experience had taught us that bunks made of split bamboo could be quickly and easily constructed and that they were more comfortable than the native hammock. Because of the heavy rains, mosquitoes were few in number, and mosquito nets were not carried. They were too bulky and were really of little protection against either the mosquito or the more common and obnoxious sand flea.

Rations consisted of those articles which, in my opinion, gave the greatest return for the bulk carried—cereals such as oatmeal and hominy grits; rice, beans, canned salmon and corned beef; flour, salt, sugar, hardtack and coffee. Canned vegetables, tomatoes, fruit and jam were carried in only limited quantities or not at all. Each increment moving beyond Waspuc was to carry enough rations to last until the fourth of August. If all went well, we should reach Poteca about that date, where we should be able to subsist off the country, and it was arranged with Major Utley that supplementary rations should be dropped by plane as soon as practicable after the first of the month. It was assumed that August fifteenth was the earliest possible date that we could expect any supplies from Bocay and that it might easily be September first before any regular convoys would begin to operate. In the meantime I planned to subsist off the country with an occasional aviation drop of such essentials of the ration as were needed.

By this time, both Quartermaster and Intelligence funds were available in Puerto Cabezas and I carried with me an initial sum of two hundred dollars to pay for labor and, if advisable, purchase information. As on my two previous trips up the river, a considerable portion of this sum was converted into leaf tobacco and the remainder carried in one dollar bills and silver.

The only portable radio set in the area was at Bocay. It was the one which I had carried there with the *Denver* Detachment the month before. Because Bocay was the last permanent outpost on my line of communications, and because of the difficulty of keeping it supplied with the necessary wet or dry cells to keep it in operation, it was decided that the radio should remain there and that I would again rely on plane liaison for communication with Bocay and Puerto Cabezas. In case of necessity, a boat could always drop down river with a message.

All of these things and more had to be considered in detail and some decision reached concerning them. The four months which I had already spent along the river stood me in good stead and I was indeed glad to have had that experience. The knowledge of the river and the river people was invaluable, but I had yet to see the river in flood at the height of the rainy season, and the reactions of the Indians when contact with bandits was imminent.

At six o'clock on the evening of July tenth, I embarked on the coastal schooner *Esfuerza*, bound for Cape Gracias á Dios with 28,000 pounds of rations for

trans-shipment to Waspuc. Originally I had planned to fly to Waspuc by plane, but it had rained constantly since the first of the month and I could wait no longer. I had with me two enlisted men of the *Denver* Detachment who had just been released to duty from the hospital and the guide, Arthur Kittle. On the deck of the schooner was a box containing a new Johnson outboard motor and gas and oil enough for the trip from the Cape to Waspuc. Upon reaching Cape Gracias, the motor was placed on Kid Green's small, flat-bottomed boat, the *Eld*—not a very satisfactory boat for river use but the only one available—and, with Kittle at the motor, I was on my way. That was the morning of the eleventh. At four-thirty on the afternoon of the thirteenth, I arrived at Waspuc. We had traveled from before daylight until after dark each day; we ate no noon-day meal and purchased our supper and breakfast where we spent the night. It had rained the entire journey. The river was then at half-flood; a muddy, deep, swiftly running stream, filled with floating debris; a much more imposing and awe-inspiring river than it had been four months before. Lalakapisa Rapids, which had given us so much trouble before, was now almost unrecognizable except for its slightly steeper gradient. So with the other rapids of the lower river. So far as motor propelled craft were concerned, the rainy season was an advantage and an aid to navigation as far up river as Awasbila, but I could already see that it would be a decided detriment to poling boats going upstream beyond that point.

At Waspuc, I found that the Coco Patrol was distributed as follows: Lieutenant DeWitt, twenty-one enlisted Marines and one enlisted Navy were en route to or at Bocay; Lieutenant Cook, forty-two enlisted Marines and one enlisted Navy were at Waspuc; two outposts of eleven men each were at Awawas and Raiti; and two men were at Cape Gracias or en route from that place to Waspuc. Of the three officers and eighty-seven enlisted men assigned to the patrol, only one-fourth of the total strength was at the point of departure, which we were supposed to clear in only nine days. There was no transportation available until the afternoon of the fourteenth, when a flotilla of six boats arrived from Bocay.

Early on the morning of the fifteenth of July, this same flotilla started up-river, carrying sixteen men of the *Denver* Detachment, completing the forward movement of that organization; three men of the *Galveston* Detachment; one pharmacist's mate attached to the patrol; and sixteen men of the 59th Company who were to relieve the two *Galveston* outposts. The remainder of the patrol, Lieutenant Cook and twenty-five enlisted, were to follow as soon as boats became available.

To man these six boats, carrying an eventual pay load of one officer and forty-two enlisted men, with their packs, equipment, four cases of .30 caliber and one case of .45 caliber ammunition, cooking utensils of a sort, and rations for twenty days, there was a native crew of forty-six Indians. Their duffel and rations for a like period were of course included in the load. This may seem like a large proportion of boatmen for the effective fighting force carried, but here again one must consider the effect of the rainy season. Had this move been made six weeks earlier, crews of four men could have done the work now assigned to six or seven, and the number of Marines carried could have been increased by one-third in a purely troop transport movement, where tactical unity did not have to be considered. With the rainy season approaching its height, with the river current near its maximum, and time an essential element, proportionally larger crews were required.

On the afternoon of the sixteenth, an incident occurred which illustrates what I believe to be the correct employment of outboard-motor propelled boats. As we approached Awasbila, where we would be forced to halt for the night at the foot of the Kiplapine Rapids, Lieutenant Cook came alongside in a pitpan equipped with a Johnson motor, the boat being operated by two Marines. He turned over to us mail and canteen supplies which had been delivered at Waspuc by plane that morning. It had taken him a little more than four hours to cover the ground that our poling crews had needed nearly two days to traverse. His boat was lightly loaded; it carried a minimum crew and consumed the minimum amount of fuel; the river was in flood and presented no serious navigational handicaps; and the country passed through was peaceful and under our control. Under these conditions, there is no doubt but that boats equipped with outboard motors have an important place in the performance of command, liaison, courier and patrolling missions, in the minimum amount of time and with maximum efficiency.

I have spoken of the tediousness of travelling day after day in a poling boat. That is quite true in fairly still waters, but it did not apply in the stretch of river from Waspuc to Bocay.

The bowmen of the boats are equipped with both poles and paddles; the boat-captain in the stern—one in the pitpan, two in the bateau—is equipped with a paddle only. The poles are used to propel the boat upstream, the paddles when crossing the river from one bank to the other or in going down river. These poles are about twelve feet long and an inch or so in diameter. When the boat is shoved off from the bank, the bowmen plant their poles on the river bottom, and, all pushing together, propel the boat through the water. The poles are lifted together, their points swept ahead, and again placed on the bottom and another push is given. This has to be done in unison to avoid a general mix-up of poles, broken heads, and upset boats. It also has to be uniform in rhythm so that, the boat once under-way, it will move at a fairly constant speed against the current. In order to find good bottom, as well as to avoid the swift current of the middle or deepest part of the river, the shallower water near the banks is used. It is the duty of the boat captain to keep the bow of the boat trimmed to the current, to keep it on an even keel to avoid swamping, and to select the actual route of the boat. He is, in fact as well as in name, the captain of his crew. Although it is by no means as simple as it sounds, it still is not a particularly difficult task in quiet water or in the dry season. With the river in flood, however, it becomes a vastly more difficult and technical job. The speed of the current is increased many fold. The river is filled with floating trees and debris of all sorts which are a constant menace to the crew and passengers, and the river often overflows its banks, forcing the boats to move along through trees and brush. It is necessary, in exceptionally high water, to cut one's way through stretches of woods. At such times, too, the trees are inhabited by snakes which have been driven into them by the river. Twice we were unwilling hosts to "piute" or "cobre" snakes, the extremely poisonous moccasin found in Nicaragua, which dropped off overhanging branches into our pitpans, and again we avoided a

small boa only by the quickness of one of our bowmen.

In order to take advantage of the quieter and more shallow water, it is necessary to cross the river from one side to the other several times during the day. To do this, the boat captain selects a stretch of water which is free of any rocks, debris or other obstacles for a considerable distance below him. Then, at a word from him, the bowman shoves the bow of the boat into the current. At the same time, the boat captain begins to paddle furiously, keeping the bow quartering into the current, while the force of the current crabs the pitpan across the stream. As it nears the opposite shore, the bowmen reach out with their poles, fend the bow away from the bank, prevent the boat from drifting farther down stream, and the stern swings into the bank. Right here, the captain also has plenty to do to prevent the stern from crashing into the bank, to keep an even keel, and to prevent the craft from swamping and capsizing.

The rapids along the Coco might be divided into three groups according to their navigability when going upstream—those which can be passed by lightly loaded pitpans or bateaux without the aid of shore lines; those which require shore lines as an aid to the crew and which necessitate the portage of all or most of the cargo; and those which are so dangerous that the boats are handled entirely by shore lines with the possible exception of one man in the boat who fends it off rocks and debris which would otherwise crush it beyond further use.

From Awasbila to Bocay, there is one bad rapid after another. At the foot of each, the boats would stop and disembark their passengers, who would have to move overland to the head of the rapid and there await the arrival of the flotilla. In many cases, all the contents of the boats had to be portaged for a hundred yards or more, the longest being over a mile, and the men manned the shore lines to drag the boats through the raging, boiling water of the river. It was hard, exhausting work, with wet feet, wet clothing, and sores caused by scratches from the jagged rocks and bushes along the canyons. Tilba, the longest rapid of them all, required five and a half hours to pass through. Even the smallest of them consumed an hour, and the night of July 19-20 found us half way through Kooras, the worst rapid on the river, where we camped on a small shelf in the bank and were nearly driven out by the rapidly rising river during the night.

Each day was much like the one before it. We were up at four o'clock; breakfast at four fifteen; the boats loaded and under-way between five and five-thirty; poling laboriously upstream or working our way through one rapid after another from dawn until we reached a suitable camping place at any time after four in the afternoon (the record of events shows that it was usually after five-thirty and twice we did not halt until after dark), and always there was the inevitable rain. Such sunlight as we had came around the middle of the day. I do not remember a single night along here that we did not go into camp in a downpour. Every man was wet from the top of his head to the soles of his shoes. Even the extra clothing carried in the roll or rubber sack was damp when it was put on for the night and it had to be repacked each morning while the wet clothes of the day before were donned again to insure at least one semi-dry outfit to sleep in. We usually spent the night at some small Indian village, although there were two nights spent in the open besides the one in the Kooras Rapids. In any event, there was only wet wood for our fire and supper was seldom served before eight o'clock, a long time after the four-fifteen breakfast we had eaten. To save both time and rations, we did not often stop for a noon-day meal, and when we did, it consisted of only hard-tack and sardines or salmon.

We arrived at Camp Utley, Bocay, late in the afternoon of July twenty-fourth. "Here . . . I found half the *Denver* Detachment. With the men that I brought with me, I have now three-fourths of my company. Lieutenant Cook is about one week behind me and will bring the rest of the men with him. Lieutenant DeWitt went back to Puerto Cabezas by plane a few days before I arrived here. It was the first time the planes have been able to get in here in over a month due to rains. I am very sorry that Ralph could not stay, for he is an excellent officer and I could use him to good advantage. . . . Never in my life have I seen so much rain as we have had during the past week. It has rained nearly steadily day and night for the past six days. The river has risen its highest for the year and trees, logs and all sorts of drift have been going downstream."[21]

The garrison at Bocay under Captain Walker was practically rationless. They had less than a week's supply on hand. It was imperative that some transportation be used in the system of supply. Not only was it necessary to provide the men at that camp with provisions, but a surplus had to be built up which my organization could draw upon as soon as it established its base at or above Poteca. As much as I disliked to release any of my transportation—each boat left behind reduced the size of my patrol proportionately—I sent my largest bateau with its full crew and two enlisted sick back to Waspuc.

The twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth were used to give all hands a much needed rest, to wash and dry clothes after nine days' hard, continuous work. Organization of the patrol which was to make the next move was effected and I had an opportunity to gather as much late information as possible of the country and of bandit dispositions above Bocay.

From Alfred Webster and Mike Thompson I learned that, after passing Santa Rita, a settlement some five miles above Bocay, there were sixty or seventy miles of absolutely uninhabited jungle before we came to the next village of Mastawas. Two days' march this side of Mastawas were the Callejon Rapids, the worst stretch of water between Bocay and Santa Cruz, a rapid which would require at least a partial portage. Webster confirmed our previous information that the main body of bandits was in the vicinity of Poteca, but he stated that a patrol going up-river might expect contact at Callejon or at any point beyond there. He gave the estimated strength of the outlaws as 350 to 450 men.

Webster was a middle aged Englishman who had come to the Coco Valley many years before from Jamaica for reasons known only to himself. He had eventually settled in Bocay, where, with his nephew, Thompson, he had become patron of that area and engaged in a lucrative gold and mahogany business. On the advent of Sandino, he had protected himself by paying assessments in money, provisions and the labor of his Indians. I had met Webster in Cape Gracias in March. I enjoyed talking with him and I believe that the

[21]Personal letter, dated at Bocay, Nic., 25 July, 1928.

friendliness which he always showed me was sincere. He was in a most difficult position. He well knew that if we should vacate Bocay before the bandit element was absolutely destroyed, he would have to leave with us if it was even suspected that he had aided us in any way. In spite of this, he gave us some excellent information. Everything which he told me about the country and about the bandit dispositions was correct. Some of this information was hard to get, and I know that he did not give us all that he might have. At the same time, as I learned later, he had, cached in his home, some of the loot from the Pis Pis raid which had been turned over to him awaiting transportation up-river to the bandits. In other words, he was playing both ends against the middle, but one can not much blame him for that. Persons such as Webster were of great potential value to us if we could prove our ability to annihilate the bandit element or, failing that, give undoubted assurance that we would remain in the country for a long enough period of time to entirely subdue the bandit element.

On the twenty-fifth of July, we collected all pitpans in the vicinity which were suitable for our use and which were not already at the camp beach. No Indians were permitted to leave camp. An outpost was established at Santa Rita to prevent the passage of any informers up river. Rations were overhauled and segregated. Reserve ammunition, taken from Captain Walker's stock because he said that it was all hand-picked with unserviceable rounds culled out, was set aside and all details were made for an early start the following morning. It was not until then that Webster realized that we were actually going into bandit territory. He asked that none of his Indians be taken as boatmen. He believed that such a move was suicidal. If his men were recognized as part of our crew, he knew that bandit reprisals would inevitably follow. I fully intended to use every boatman in camp, promising him, however, that his men would be well paid and well provided for. At the end of the day, I had boats and boatmen sufficient to carry my entire available patrol of 61 enlisted Marines, 2 pharmacist's mates and Arthur Kittle, the guide and interpreter.

It had rained steadily since our arrival at Bocay, culminating in an especially heavy downpour during the afternoon and night of the twenty-fifth. The night was as dark and black as any I have ever seen. In spite of posting extra sentries over the boat moorings on the beach and around the buildings occupied by the Indians, our largest bateau and a smaller pitpan broke loose and were swept away in the rapidly rising river and several of the local Indians slipped into the bush between the sentries. It was impossible to hold the sentries accountable for this. The river rose so quickly and the current increased to such an extent that, if there had been no special post over the boats, our entire flotilla would have carried away. There was less excuse for the loss of the boatmen, but under the conditions which prevailed, a cordon of sentries would have been required to have stopped them and it was not possible to fix the responsibility for their escape on any one sentry.

As a result, our departure the next morning was considerably delayed while boat loadings were rearranged and the patrol was reorganized in accordance with the transportation then available. We finally cleared Bocay with seven boats carrying 46 Marines, 1 hospital corpsman, the guide and myself. This included the boat and outpost at Santa Rita.

The patrol was organized into one platoon as follows:

Plat. Hdqrs.: Patrol Commander.
Sgt. Mosier, 2nd in command.
2 runners.
2 cooks.
1 pharmacist's mate.
1st Section: Sergeant Schonberger.
2 squads, *Denver* Detachment.
1 squad, *Galveston* Detachment.
2nd Section: Sergeant Hickethier.
2 squads, *Denver* Detachment.

There were left behind at Bocay: Sergeant Byrd, 2 squads of the *Galveston* Detachment, and 1 Pharmacist's Mate.

The formation adopted was as follows:

Advanced Guard

1 pitpan—Advanced Guard commander and one half squad (3 rifles, 1 BAR and 1 pistol).

At a variable distance, depending on the river and terrain, usually from 100 to 150 yards, came the

Main Body

(Distance between elements about 50 yards)

1 pipanti — Headquarters group (CO, 2 runners and guide).
1 bateau—one half squad and one squad.
1 pitpan—one squad.
1 pitpan—Section Leader and one squad.
1 bateau—one half squad, galley force and pharmacist's mate.

Distance, 75 to 100 yards:

Rear Guard

1 pitpan—Rear Guard commander and one half squad.

Individual packs were carried in each boat with the men therein. They were used as seats, being placed on short sticks laid thwart-ship three or four inches above the bottom to keep them clear of the water which was certain to be shipped during the day. Rations were divided among the boats of the main body although, through necessity, the bulk of them was carried in the two bateaux, and the larger share was in that bateau at the rear of the main body. Prior to leaving Bocay, each man was issued an emergency ration of one small can of beans, two cans of sardines, and sugar and coffee or tea in the condiment can. This was carried in the roll and was not to be used except on order of the patrol commander. The bacon can was utilized to carry tooth brush, tooth paste, and cigarettes in order to keep them dry. Each rifleman carried 100 rounds of ammunition, each automatic rifleman 200 rounds and each Thompson sub-machine gunner 150 rounds of caliber .45 (100 in the box type magazine and 50 in the drum type). Those men armed with the pistol carried 21 rounds of ammunition each.

Due to several reasons, we made good only five miles in as many hours on the first day. Although the river had started to recede from its flood peak of the preceding night, its height and swiftness were serious obstacles to travel. Halfway to Santa Rita, planes were sighted going into the landing at Bocay. As it was the first aerial contact since the eighteenth, my boat left the column and returned to Camp Utley to pick up mail,

orders and late information, if any, and canteen supplies which I assumed would be aboard. Santa Rita was the last good camp site for several miles. Finally, I hoped by a late patrol to find additional boats and boatmen in the settlement at Bocay. A small patrol dropped down river at dusk. It failed to locate any more boats, but four Indians, one of whom had been with me before as a boat-captain and who knew the Bocay-Santa Cruz area thoroughly, were added to the force.

The morning of the twenty-sixth had broken clear and bright, an auspicious omen, we thought. Before dark, however, the rains were once more upon us, an unceasing downpour which lasted until the thirty-first of the month.

The river rose steadily, and by the evening of the twenty-eighth had passed the flood mark reached three days before. Our rate of march was slowed to only a half mile an hour. Late that afternoon, we made camp on a small, flat space on the north bank of the river, just large enough for our bivouac, some six feet above the water. In accordance with customary procedure, the advance guard continued on up the river for at least a mile above the camp site before returning to bivouac, and shore patrols were pushed out into the brush on both banks to look for any trails which might exist. The boat ferrying the south bank patrol across the river "capsized, resulting in the loss of two (2) Browning Automatic rifles and one (1) Springfield with belts and ammunition. Unable to retrieve due to deep and swift water. Lost 104 lbs. corned beef (No. 1 tins) and other rations."[22] Outside of a thorough wetting, there was no injury to personnel and all boat equipment was salvaged.

By nine o'clock that night, the water began to overflow the bivouac area. Between then and daybreak, we were forced to move three more times, each move higher up the bank and onto steeper and more unsuitable terrain. In a little over twelve hours, the river had risen about twenty feet. It was the highest flood in over thirty years, the water actually covering some of the permanent buildings on the south bank of the river at Waspuc. Not only was the water so high that, to travel at all, we would be forced to cut our way through the trees and brush, but the raging torrent was so swift and so full of every sort of debris that any movement of the patrol was too dangerous to be considered. It was necessary, however, to find some place suitable for a camp. At daybreak, we embarked, and moved slowly and cautiously up river for about a half mile, where we found an area made to order, large enough and level enough for our purpose, edged with a small growth of bamboo and overgrown with manaca, and with a small stream on the western edge which formed a cove for the protection of our flotilla from the current of the main river. There we constructed our camp of lean-tos, waiting for the river to slacken enough to permit further advance.

I remember this camp for two incidents. After camp was made and breakfast eaten, I lay down on my bamboo and manaca leaf bunk, which was a couple of inches off the ground, and dozed for an hour or more, making up some of the sleep I had lost the night before. When I got up and started out of the lean-to, a large, full-grown moccasin crawled out from under the bunk, too. I pulled my pistol from its holster and started shooting. At the first shot, the thing headed towards the river. Even though I fired the six remaining shots, it still crawled away. By this time, Indians and men were around. They formed a semi-circle on the river side, cutting brush and leaves as they moved in towards my shack. A few feet in front of it they found the snake, already dead; a female, full of young "piutes," and fully six feet long.

During the second afternoon, I suddenly saw a large tree on the river bank start to move. The water had undermined the bank, and over it went into our mooring space, falling directly across the center of one of our larger pitpans. Down went the boat. With a little quick work, the boat was rescued before it was caught in the current and carried down stream. It was unhurt, but a full sack of beans, some hardtack and other rations which had been left in it were washed away.

By the morning of the thirty-first, the river had abated enough to permit travel with a fair degree of safety. That night was spent at the foot of the Kibus-Callejon Rapids. There extra ammunition (2 bandoleers per rifleman and 12 magazines per Browning Automatic Rifle) was issued. I had reason to believe that, in spite of our precautions at Santa Rita, word of our advance had preceded us. We had intercepted the Casca-Coco River Trail, over which Jiron had passed in June. There we found an abandoned bandit camp, some discarded saddles, and, most important, the signs of travel up-stream by one or two men within the week. If the bandits knew of our coming, it was in the Callejon canyon that I expected our first contact. The desertion of five of the Bocay Indians that night also pointed to trouble ahead.

To meet this threat, the first section went overland to the head of the rapids in order to secure the passage of the boat train under Sergeant Mosier and the 2nd Section. The going was rough; much of the way we had to cut our way through the bush, as the main trail following the river bed was under water. At four-thirty we had reached the head of the canyon.

Within a half hour, a runner reported from Mosier with word that the worst of the rapids had been passed, the portage completed and the boats reloaded except for personnel, and that the train should be up with the 1st Section soon after dark.

Scarcely had this man finished speaking when a second runner arrived. The large bateau carrying the galley gear, the medical supplies and the majority of our rations had been caught in a whirlpool, became unmanageable, swamped and had been carried downstream. The remaining boats were manned, and boatmen and Marines had returned to the foot of the rapids to salvage as much as possible. The bateau was recovered. In the process, a second boat was capsized and the contents thereof were lost. At dark, the 1st Section was encamped at the head of the Callejon Canyon and the 2nd Section, boat flotilla and such of our supplies as remained were at the foot of the rapids. Of our rations, which I had carefully husbanded since leaving Waspuc by eating only two meals a day and those none too large, we had practically nothing left; our cooking utensils were gone; and all of our medical supplies except the small kit carried by Maddux were lost. Another Browning automatic rifle and a case of .30 caliber ammunition also went to the bottom of the river and could not be recovered. And to top it all, a whole day had been wasted. The only redeeming feature was that

[22] RECORD OF EVENTS, Coco Patrol, 28 July, 1928.

no men were drowned, as might easily have happened in the mad dash back to the foot of the rapids.

Although it was not possible to prove such a contention, I believe that the whole thing was maneuvered by the Indians in the hope that we would be forced to return to Bocay. They were certainly very much frightened. They expected an ambush momentarily. They doubted our ability to protect ourselves and they thought that we would be surrounded, annihilated and all hands massacred. Shortly before this incident occurred, they reported seeing a Spaniard in the bush near the river, a report which could not be confirmed. It was this, I believe, which precipitated the entire fiasco.

By the following afternoon, August second, the entire patrol was re-united at the head of Callejon. On that day, too, one of the pitpans was swamped and capsized during the passage of the rapids but without the disastrous effects of the day before. This whole episode was summed up in a letter written that night. "Just a note before retiring to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 15th of July. It was dropped by plane yesterday, landed in the river, was rained on all afternoon, but was still legible when I read it last night. I had just reached the point where you hoped we would keep our rations dry when Sergeant Mosier reported our boats adrift in the rapids. Our rations now consist of some coffee, with no sugar or milk; flour, with no salt; lard; and a very little bacon. We mix the flour with water, fry it in lard, drink our coffee with it, and call it any meal we feel like. And our only cooking utensils are a broken fry pan and a large baking pan with a hole in it. It is a great life."[23]

One had to have some sense of humor in a situation like that, especially when that same mail drop brought me a bill from the Area Quartermaster for rations during the month of July at fifty-three cents per day. I covered the thing with all the remarks I could think of, most of them not very complimentary, as I recall, and sent it back to Puerto Cabezas. Of course, I eventually had to pay the bill.

At dawn on the third, I sent one large pitpan with a crew of two Indians back to Bocay with messages to Major Utley and Captain Walker, reporting all that had happened, requesting medical supplies, and asking for information of Lieutenant Cook and the rest of the Coco Patrol. One man, with a dangerously high fever from an undiagnosed cause (it was not malaria), was evacuated in this boat. His rifle replaced one of those which had been lost. Our cargo had been reduced to the point that we could easily dispense with the services of this pitpan, especially when one considered the formation which would be adopted from then on.

Above Callejon, our means of security were strengthened by sending small shore patrols on each bank of the river to precede the advance guard boat by 50 to 100 yards. If the brush became too thick or the bank too steep for passage, the shore patrol was ferried beyond the obstruction and landed again as soon as possible. It was a rule that both patrols would never be ferried ahead at the same time; at least one of them had to be ashore during the entire day's march. This procedure slowed up the rate of progress considerably but it was considered absolutely essential. It was impossible to observe the shore carefully from the boats or to pick up any well planned ambush. An open poling boat moving slowly upstream is exceptionally vulnerable if it comes under fire from a well-chosen, well prepared position ashore.

By noon of the fourth, we "intercepted a trail from Bocay River coming out on Wanks (Coco) River about halfway between Par Par and Ulwaking creeks. Good, wide trail evidently used by fair sized mounted force about six week ago."[24] This was the route used by Sanchez in crossing from Tunavalon on the Bocay River to Mastawas in June.

At "1330—Main body landed at point above Ulwaking mouth and proceeded to Mastawas by trail."[25] We reached that village at three o'clock.

The settlement of Mastawas lies at the head of and along the western side of a large U-shaped bend in the Coco River. It is in a small bowl-like valley, with high wooded peaks to the east, north and west, all on the left bank of the river, and lower, less rugged hills to the south on the other side of the stream. We approached the first two houses at the head of the bend in a blinding downpour which formed an excellent screen for our movements. They were unoccupied. There were plenty of signs of recent inhabitants and the presence of chickens, pigs and cattle indicated that our fasting was at an end. To the south of these two houses was a small stream, then unfordable due to the high water. On the high ground beyond were three other houses which were apparently uninhabited. Abandoned leaf shacks, temporary potreros, well beaten paths and discarded saddles and mules gave evidence of recent bandit occupancy.

Upon the arrival of the leading boat of our train, I crossed the stream to the south with the second section to investigate the terrain and to decide upon the location of our camp for the night. A patrol under Corporal Hillman was sent still farther to the south, and at 1540 "surprised two Sandinistas at a house on the outskirts of Mastawas. Warned by the barking of their dogs, both men, although fired on, escaped into the bush, leaving behind 1 Remington .30 caliber (Russian Mod. 1916), 1 S. & W. revolver cal. .38, fuzes, caps and bombs, powder and shot, 2 shotguns, 4 machetes, several papers and orders signed by Sandino, Giron and Altimirano. Two men evidently Capt. Aguilar and Barraca. Aguilar had orders to remain at Mastawas, his home, to inform Sandino of our actions. Evidently superseded by orders brought by Barraca to rejoin Giron's camp, where forces are being assembled."[26]

From the bandit correspondence, it was evident that Sandino was entirely ignorant of our occupation of Bocay and of the advance of our patrol.[27] He believed there was no danger of attack from the east and that his down river flank was absolutely secure. It was also apparent that no information of our movement had reached the bandits. The escape of Aguilar and Barraca was, therefore, a decidedly bad break for us. Aguilar was not a professional bandit. He had been impressed into Sandino's forces by circumstance and not through his own volition, other than his belief in Sandino's propaganda that the Marines would ruthlessly kill him and his family and destroy his property if

(*Continued on page 57*)

[23] Extract from personal letter dated at Callejon, Nic., 2 August, 1928.
[24] RECORD OF EVENTS, Coco Patrol, 4 August, 1928.
[25] RECORD OF EVENTS, Coco Patrol, 4 August, 1928.
[26] RECORD OF EVENTS, Coco Patrol, 4 August, 1928.
[27] Copies of captured bandit correspondence.

many more rounds, and the men detailed to carry ammunition for the cal. .30 weapons could be armed with an effective "holster" gun in the form of a 25-20 pistol. The "machine rifle" could be built as a "semi-automatic," capable of being fired from the shoulder by expert riflemen. This arm could have a B. A. R. type magazine, but would not be discharged by releasing the breech-block from a rearward position. Thus the "rifle" would be highly accurate, "handier" than the B. A. R., yet capable of being fired at a cyclic rate in excess of one hundred rounds per minute. Men armed with this weapon would be "semi-automatic riflemen;" those armed with the 25-20 rifle, "infantry-men;" those armed with the 25-20 pistol, officers, "ammunition carriers," runners, signalmen, etc.

No soldier armed with a shoulder weapon should be "out of range" within 400 yards. Beyond that range only experts are effective. Consider the limitations of the shotgun here. The heavier "automatics" could be employed to stop armored cars, airplanes, and the like.

X. PROBABLE MODIFICATIONS: SPECIFIC

If, as is quite probable, the .30 Mark I semi-automatic rifle becomes the standard for troops, lighter-weight machine guns will be introduced. To maintain simplicity it is submitted that the pistol and sub-machine gun be combined into one arm. Such an arm should be carried in a shoulder or belt-holster, and should have an effective range of from 150 to 200 yards. Despite the fact that the .45 was adopted to provide stopping power, it is believed that recent developments in the .38 render it desirable for service use, more particularly because of increased range and penetration.

More of these cartridges can be carried per magazine. The ammunition is now being manufactured commercially. An improved pistol action can be made to handle this cartridge, and the resulting weapon would solve the problem with which we have been faced, especially if provided with a "shoulder-stock" or frame.

XI. CONCLUSION

1. It is concluded that the military shotgun would not be suitable and should not be given consideration in our small arms armament.
2. The sub-machine gun could be improved by combining it so far as possible with the pistol.
3. A .38 "super" automatic holster-stock pistol would be the most ideal solution, in conjunction with the advent of the cal. .30 semi-automatic rifle, light-weight machine gun, and .50 cal. anti-tank and AA gun.
4. The above suggestions are submitted, not necessarily as suggested solutions to the problem, but rather to stimulate further thought and study of this problem in our military small arms.

THE COCO PATROL

(*Continued from page 43*)

they ever came to Mastawas. It is probable that, had he been captured, we would have procured valuable information from him as to the bandit dispositions, and it is certain that his capture or death would have prevented the outlaws from gaining knowledge of our advance for at least another day.

In spite of the fact that with the escape of these two men we had lost any chance of further surprise and that, apprised of our approach, we could expect to meet the bandits in force at any time, there was a general feeling of relief at our arrival at Mastawas. Everyone felt that "the worst of the trip is over, now that we have reached this place, the first of the Spanish settlements and the first house of any kind to be seen in nine days. The last nine days have been as hard as any I have yet had. . . . The Indians were very much frightened. They were sure that we were to be attacked momentarily, and so they moved very, very slowly. Between this and the high water, it has taken twice as long as I had expected. . . . The river above is fairly well inhabited and there are trails which we can and will follow. If our Indians all leave, and our boats break up, we can still exist, and live about as well as we are now. Those sixty miles of country without a single house or source of supplies and no trails did not particularly please me, I must confess."[28]

As an illustration of the fact that troops, once committed to the hills in small wars, should not be pulled back into rest areas unless the period of recreation which can be given them is of sufficient duration in comparison with the travel involved to insure that the desired recuperation of the men will actually be attained, I quote the following: "I am sorry that my men and I ever went back to Puerto Cabezas. It was a long hard trip, softened everyone, got them out of the habit of woods living, and it has been a long drag trying to get them into shape again."[29] Some of the men in the *Denver* Detachment had been in Puerto Cabezas only four days before they were ordered back to the hills and none of them were there longer than ten days. This rest period was altogether too short in comparison with the month's travel involved in moving from Bocay to the coast and back again. The trip took much more out of them than their stay at Bocay during the entire interval would have done. However, it must be remembered that at the time the *Denver* Detachment was withdrawn from Bocay in June, there was no intimation that the Coco Patrol would be ordered to move out two weeks later.

With all hope of surprise gone, and with native beans, bananas and fresh beef added to our food supply to break the semi-fast of the past four days, I decided to lay over at Mastawas on the fifth of the month. Again from a letter of that date, "It is the first day's rest in a week, and it gave the men a chance to take a bath, wash clothes, etc. Also many of them have sore feet. These came about due to the rains which keep their feet wet and tender all the time, and most of them have worn out such socks as they had with them. Those feet are going to be among their best friends from now on and will spell success or defeat of my plans here."[30]

[28] Personal letter dated at Mastawas, 5 August, 1928.
[29] Personal letter dated at Mastawas, 5 August, 1928.
[30] Personal letter, dated at Mastawas, 5 August, 1928.

Leaving the advance element of the Coco Patrol at Mastawas, let us consider for a moment what was happening down the river. Lieutenant Cook had been left at Waspuc with orders to proceed as soon as transportation became available. By the night of July twenty-first, he had one large bateau and three small pitpans with which he planned to move the following day. Because of the shortage of boatmen, he carried outboard motors to supplement his small crews and to speed up the travel of the bateau. To give some idea of the difficulties which he encountered, I quote from his Record of Events.[31]

"Waspuc, 7-22-28. Strength (available): 1 officer, 24 enlisted. Weather: rainy; river, high. 1000. Left Waspuc. 1630. Arrived San Carlos. Original intentions to travel in three small and one large boat. Lieutenant Cunningham, C.O., Waspuc, ordered my boat out as third boat. Sgt. Murphy and six enlisted in fourth boat have not caught up.

"7-23-28. Weather: rain; river, high. 1630. Arrived Awawas. Motor boat with Pfc. White and Pvt. Bogan (59th Company) capsized in the rapids prior to my arrival. Found Pvt. Bogan on rocks but no trace of Pfc. White. Salvaged motor and boat after several hours. No report of or from Sgt. Murphy. Am leaving four cases gas and two motors here at Awawas.

"7-24-28. Continuous rain. River rising rapidly. 1630. Arrived Tilba Ducra. Barely made it through Tilba Rapids in one day. River at such height that travel is almost impossible.

"7-25-28. Continuous rain. River at flood. 0930. Left Tilba Ducra at 0600. Returned after proceeding about 200 yards. During night river rose about 10 feet; impossible to proceed until flood recedes."

He left Tilba Ducra on the morning of the twenty-seventh. On the twenty-eighth, "1800. Arrived Siksayere. Showers. River rising rapidly—expect flood. Slow travel due to having to cut trees and underbrush along banks of river."

He was forced to lay over at Siksayere during the next two days. On the twenty-ninth, he recorded: "Weather, continuous rain. River at flood height. Due to height and swiftness of water and driftwood, it is impossible to travel through rapids (Kiplasaura) just above here. Am compelled to wait until water recedes," and on the thirtieth, "River highest of year, making smallest rapids impassable. Cannot go forward or retreat at present."

Although the rains continued, the river abated to such an extent that he resumed travel on the last day of the month. At Raiti, on the first of August, he "Found outpost without rations; left four days' supply." At daybreak on the third, he split his patrol into two groups. One officer and eight enlisted men left Susanwas in the bateau with motors attached, and nine enlisted followed in the poling boat. After narrowly averting disaster because of motor failure in the Pansig Rapids, he arrived late that afternoon at Bocay. The poling boat reached that place at one-thirty on the afternoon of August fifth. Late the same day, Cook, with twenty-one enlisted, departed from Bocay in the same two boats for Poteca and Santa Cruz, camping that night at Santa Rita.[32] Sergeant Murphy and six enlisted men were still at Waspuc on the first, his boat and boat crew having been retained for emergency use at that post. The nine men who had arrived at Bocay that day remained there and four others were either sick present or had already been evacuated to Puerto Cabezas for hospitalization.

It has been impossible for me to adequately describe the hardships which these men in the Coco Patrol endured during those days of July. These few remarks of Lieutenant Cook's will have, perhaps, shed a little more light on the difficulties which we encountered. It was heart rending, back breaking work; pushing, lifting, pulling boats through one rapid after another; carrying supplies and equipment around innumerable portages; living on two scant meals a day and seeing what food remained swept away little by little in the flood; every canyon, every rock, every clump of bushes a hiding place for bandits, a possible ambush; the muddy, swirling, treacherous river, filled with debris of every sort, seeming always to be reaching out to destroy that small group of men who dared to use it in its zenith; scarcely a day that some boat did not capsize; never a day that some man was swept into the current, to be saved only by his own ability to swim, by the quickness of his fellows, or by sheer good luck; always wet, always cold, living in wet clothes and blankets at night; never thoroughly dry; and through it all, the interminable rain,—depressing, demoralizing, unceasing. Only those men who were there, and those who later were with Major Geyer's Coco River Patrol of the Northern Area which was abandoned because of the difficulties which they encountered, can ever realize the things they had to compete against, the difficulties they had to overcome.

On the morning of the sixth of August, we resumed our advance up the river from Mastawas. Our progress was slow because of the necessity of the shore flank patrols having to pick their way through the heavy underbrush along the river banks. There was a good wide trail of recent construction along the north shore, evidently used by the bandits as a military road, if such a thing could be said to exist in Nicaragua, but it was too far away from the river to be of value to us. About two miles above Mastawas, we had our next contact with the outlaws. A small patrol, coming down river by boat, was sighted by our leading element as it approached a bend in the river. At the same time, they spotted our boat flotilla and paddled furiously into the beach. Although fired upon, they all escaped into the brush and retreated up-river. Blood stains along their trail indicated that our fire was not entirely without effect, but once again we had lost an opportunity to capture someone who could have given us vital information of the hostile dispositions above us.

The farther we advanced above Mastawas, the more positive signs we discovered of bandit occupation of the valley. An abandoned lean-to encampment, numerous broken down, saddle-sore backed mules, discarded aparejo and saddles, and the well beaten heavily traveled trail were all indications of a good sized force in the vicinity. Deserted houses which had evidently been hurriedly vacated also pointed to trouble ahead. At Yamales and Ililiquas, two small settlements about a mile and a half apart which we reached on the morning of the seventh, we found a veritable net-work of trails leading in all directions and all well traffic-worn. All of these were patrolled for a radius of a half mile without contact with either civilian or outlaw. A small

[31] RECORD OF EVENTS, Coco Patrol Detachment under Lieutenant J. S. Cook, Jr., U.S.M.C.

[32] "The lack of Indians and boats here delays the departure of remainder of Coco Patrol." (Lieut. Cook, RECORD OF EVENTS, Bocay, 4 August, 1928.)

cache of firearms, bomb fuse, rude leather-covered hand grenades, bandit correspondence and other articles found in the largest house at Yamales identified the heaqquarters of Jiron, Sandino's most aggressive leader and shortly to become his Chief of Staff. At Ililiquas we discovered twenty riding saddles, all in good condition, and some of the booty, including an American flag, which the outlaws had procured during their raid of the Pis Pis mines. Most of this, being of no use to us, we destroyed.

At a quarter of twelve, just as the order had been given for the advance to be resumed above Ililiquas, two OL-8 amphibians from Puerto Cabezas came into sight. They dropped mail and sixteen sacks of rations, and Captain Howard, the senior pilot, made several unsuccessful attempts to pick up a message I had prepared for the Commander, Eastern Area, because of the poor approaches afforded by the terrain. Shortly after twelve o'clock, both planes headed back for the east coast.

The approaches to the dropping ground at the junction of the Ililiquas and Coco Rivers and for the attempted pick-up were made each time from south to north so that the area along both banks of the river for a mile above Ililiquas to include the first big bend up river was flown over at least twenty times. Although I was soon to learn that a cleverly concealed ambush was already laid and occupied in this very area, nothing suspicious was seen by either pilot or observer. In the meantime, Lieutenant Conway reconnoitered the valley to the south and at "1200—On bend of river approximately two miles up river from Captain Edson's column sighted four natives who were suspicious and acted as tho they were on sentry duty. They took to bush. Dropped bombs and straffed area. Flew back to Captain Edson and reported entire event."[33] We, on the ground, heard the bombing and straffing and naturally were very much interested in knowing the reason therefor. One can imagine my disappointment when, after retrieving the message dropped by Conway's observer, I found only the following: "Dropped two bombs." This contained nothing which I did not already know and I was still as much in the dark as to what had been sighted to call for this attack and where it was as ever.

I have not made these remarks in any spirit of criticism or derogation and I sincerely hope that they will not be so construed by either aviators or line personnel. No one in the Marine Corps realizes more than I the dangers which our aviators faced day after day and the tremendous difficulties of terrain and weather which they disregarded or overcame in giving the man on the ground constant and excellent support during our entire activities in Nicaragua. These incidents are recorded for the sole purpose of emphasizing, if possible, the importance of recognizing the capabilities of aviation on the one hand and the necessity of complete exchange of information on the other if we are to work together as an efficient combat team.

There is a tendency among the uninformed to consider that the powers of aviation are unlimited. In close, heavily wooded and rugged terrain, a position can be constructed and occupied by a considerable force without fear of detection from the air so long as the occupants remain under cover and motionless while airplanes are operating above them. This should be thoroughly understood and the responsibility of a ground troop commander to maintain and continue proper security measures is not lessened by the fact that the area he is to pass through has been reconnoitered in front of him by aviation.

In the second incident, Lieutenant Conway was fully aware of the importance of the target which he had engaged. Being occupied with the maneuvering of the plane and searching the terrain over which he was flying, he simply told his observer to prepare the message which was to be dropped to me. The man in the rear cock-pit had not seen all that Conway had, and in writing "Dropped two bombs," he had reported all that he, himself, knew about the affair. The mistake here was in not showing the message to Conway for his approval before it was dropped. To be of much assistance to the man on the ground, this message should have contained: what he had seen, where he had seen it, what he had done about it, and the effect of the aerial attack as observed. In my opinion, there is never any danger of the observer, either ground or air, passing on too much information; the tendency is rather to report too little.

The house at Ililiquas was some thirty feet above the Coco River and about three hundred yards from it. There were boat moorings at the junction of the Ililiquas and Coco Rivers as well as on the Ililiquas opposite the house. Trails led from both moorings. There was an equilateral triangular shaped clearing with its apex at the junction of the two rivers and its base line passing just east of the house. The ground sloped gradually to the east and southeast from the house with a good trail leading off in that direction. To the north, the ground had at one time been cleared for several hundred yards on both sides of the Coco. At that time, there were patches of corn, sugar cane and bananas and the remainder was overgrown with manaca, underbrush and second growth hardwoods. Directly across the river on the west bank was a large banana patch with trails running to the north and south out of it. The valley to the north as far as Yamales was wide open, with the hills sloping away quite gradually from both sides of the river. A thousand yards south of Ililiquas, however, the valley became narrow with the hills rising abruptly to the east and west, that on the west bank of the river being almost precipitous, and the river itself, for another thousand yards, was narrow, swift and deep. It then made a sharp bend to the west and the country again opened up. Even through the gorge, there was a sandy shelf along the banks of the river some twenty yards wide and five or six feet above the water level, filled with boulders, uprooted trees and dense underbrush.

At twelve forty, after a luncheon of hard-tack, coffee, and salmon and corned beef which had burst in the drop from the planes, shore patrols of one squad each from the 1st Section moved out on both banks followed by the boat flotilla in its regular formation on the east side of the river.

As the patrols approached the gorge south of Ililiquas, Corporal Porter, in command of that on the right (east) bank reported bamboo bush and heavy underbrush at "A" (see sketch) as impassable. I ordered the advance guard boat to pick up that patrol and carry it beyond the obstruction where it would disembark and then resume its movement along the shore. At the same time, Sergeant Mosier, in command of the

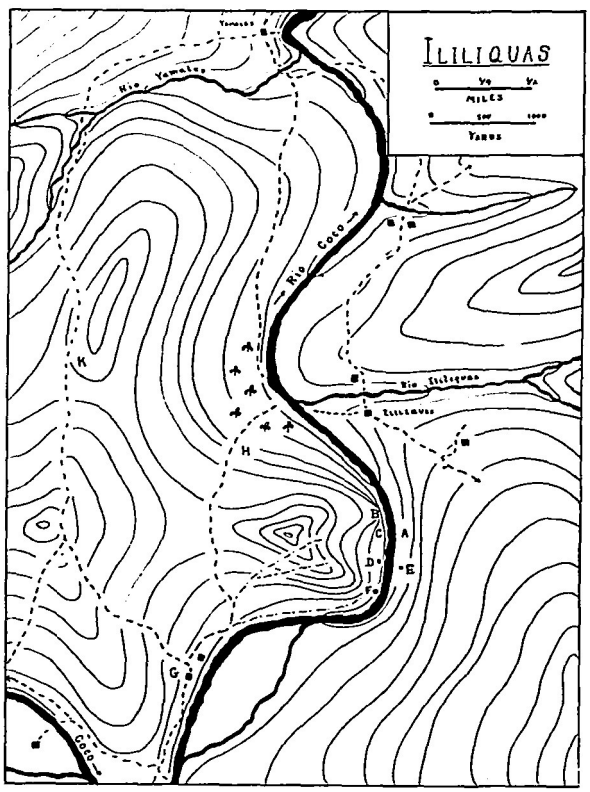
[33]FLIGHT REPORT, Aviation Detachment, VO-6M, Puerto Cabezas, Nic., 7 August, 1928.

west shore patrol at "B," reported an overhanging cliff reaching almost to the water's edge and his way blocked by a thick mass of bamboo bush.

Even confronted with these obstacles, the shore patrols had performed the function for which they were established. The sight of Marines on the east bank of the river and the approach of other men along the shore below him when he had expected to see all of our force in boats so frightened a bandit in position at "C" that he jumped up and ran to the south. A few scattering shots, all without effect, were fired at him before he again took cover.

Ordering the third squad of the 1st Section, which was in the boat behind mine, and Corporal Porter to follow me, and calling to Mosier to cut his way through the brush in front of him, I crossed the river and with Yelanich and Paine, my two runners, and Arthur Kittle, landed just below the point at which the bandit had shown himself. Almost immediately I found myself looking down the muzzle of a rifle in the hands of an outlaw who jumped up in front of me. At this crucial moment, my automatic pistol produced a misfire. Except for the fact that I tripped over a vine and fell forward just as the bandit pulled the trigger, it is possible that I might have been hurt. Before he could reload his rifle, Yelanich had taken good care of that outlaw. We pushed forward and overran the next group of fox-holes when rifle fire, estimated at twenty-five, opened from our front and right flank, and two hostile machine guns located at "D" and "E" came into action.

By this time Porter's squad was ashore and it was committed to the front along the sandy shelf paralleling the river. Sullivan's (3rd) squad was sent up the hill to the west to engage bandits and rifle fire coming from that direction. As bandits were still coming around our right and rear, the squad under Mosier was used to extend our flank still farther to the right when it finally cut its way through the bush and came up. The machine guns were so sited as to rake the shore line along both banks of the river and bullets were falling in the water all around the boats containing the second section and mess detail. Boatmen and Marines went over the side and, hanging onto the boats, keeping them between themselves and the machine gun fire, they drifted down stream out of range. Always before when a man had gone into the river, he had inevitably lost his rifle and ammunition. This time, however, every man came ashore fully equipped and no one later reported any difficulty in staying above water.



Firing had started at about a quarter past one. By two o'clock my three squads were extended up the hill in a line a little north of west from the river bank. The second section was reassembled at the edge of the clearing near Ililiquas and ready to advance. The hostile machine gun at "D" had been withdrawn and, except for an occasional shot from the right side of the river, all bandit fire had ceased. I sent Sergeant Mosier back to Ililiquas with instructions to order the second section to advance along the right bank and drive out the hostile force at "E" and to cooperate with a corresponding advance by the 1st section on the left bank of the river. Mosier was then to take charge of the boat flotilla and follow the combat units at a reasonable distance in rear. Coordination between the sections on opposite sides of the river was to be maintained by the flank men of each assault unit. Private Myer Stengel volunteered for this duty for the second section. The left squad of the first section was to move slowly along the beach and act as a pivot for the remainder of the section which was to swing over the crest of the hill to the right and envelop the bandits' left flank.

This plan was put into effect at three o'clock. The second section advanced and drove out the small hostile group at "E." In order to control the enveloping movement, I had moved up the hill towards my right. Contrary to instructions, the left squad also moved up the hill to engage a small group of bandits, thus leaving the beach uncovered. At three thirty, the second section was about a hundred yards south of "E" and the leading boat about opposite "D" when a burst of machine gun and rifle fire was opened up from the bandit group at "F." The second section immediately returned the fire and the outlaws hurriedly withdrew to the west. By this time, the first section was over the crest of the hill. Some of the retreating bandits actually ran into this section and others came under its fire as they crossed the low ground near the river. The first section continued to advance without further contact until, at four-thirty, it was south of the two houses shown at "G." All communication with the remainder of the patrol had been lost. I considered it essential that my small force be reunited before dark so I ordered the first section to return toward Ililiquas along the left bank of the river. As we approached "D" we exchanged a few shots with a group of outlaws coming from the northwest. This group withdrew into the brush and this concluded the action.

We reached Ililiquas at six o'clock that evening. The remainder of the patrol was already assembled there.

Three men, riding in the leading boat of the flotilla as it had resumed its movement up river that afternoon, had been caught in the burst of fire from the hostile machine gun at "F." They had jumped into the water and, mutually supporting each and assisted by the Indian boatmen, had drifted with the boat down stream out of range, coming ashore at Ililiquas. The other boats in the column had dropped back with them. After the bandits had fled from their position following the well directed fire of the second section, those two squads had dropped back to protect the boat train and the wounded men.

Private Stengel was reported missing. His body was found near the beach below "E." He had been hit squarely in the chest with a dum dum bullet and apparently had died instantly. The hazardous duty of flank connecting file for which he had volunteered warranted the Navy Cross, which was awarded to him posthumously.

Sergeant Mosier had been wounded through the left shoulder; Sergeant Schoneberger in the left arm, with the bullet still there, and Trumpeter Paine through the left side of the neck. With only the limited supplies carried in his field kit—all others had been lost in the Callejon Rapids—and improvised bandages, Maddux, my corpsman, had dressed the wounded and had them resting comfortably by the time I got back to camp.

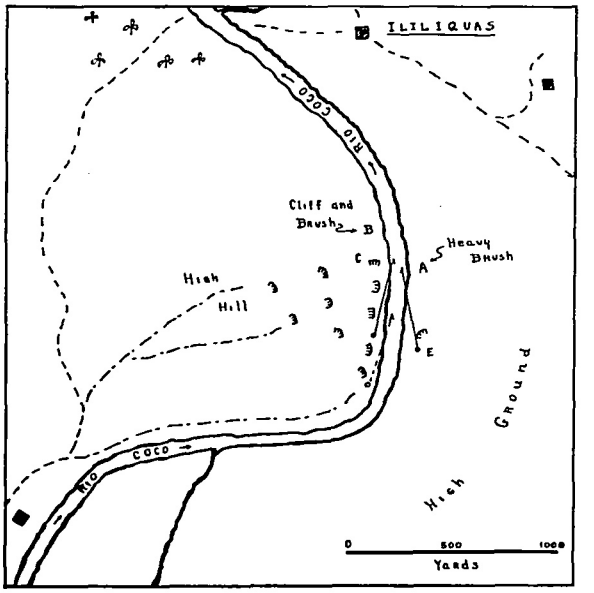
It was nearly dark and nothing more could be done that day. Guards were detailed for the night, camp established, preparations made to evacuate the wounded and the body of Stengel to Bocay by boat, supper prepared and eaten, and orders issued for the continuance of the advance the following morning.

Each man had been carrying two extra bandoleers of ammunition besides that which he had in his belt. This represented all the good ammunition within the patrol and no more would be available until our supply system was established from the East Coast. Each man had been impressed with the necessity of conserving his ammunition, and instructed to shoot only at exposed or likely targets. As a result our expenditure was light, averaging less than twenty rounds per man. More ammunition was lost from the bandoleers than was shot through our rifles. That evening, all extra ammunition was collected and placed in boxes to accompany the supply section of the boat train the next day. From then on, only the hundred rounds which could be placed in the belt were carried on the person.

The bandit casualties were ten known dead and three wounded. Twelve rifles, some ammunition and machetes were captured. The weapons from my own casualties and the best of those taken from the bandits were used to replace those which had been lost in the river during our advance from Waspuc so that every available man in the patrol was again armed with a serviceable weapon of some description. The outlaws were well organized, well disposed and well led. They were uniformly dressed in blue denim and looked less like the orthodox bandit than did we with our month's growth of beard, worn out clothing and broken shoes. Each man had a red and black band around his arm and on the brim of his hat. Riflemen had from five to ten rounds of ammunition on the person, although from the amount expended, machine gun ammunition appeared to be plentiful. Numerous hand grenades of the home made variety were employed by them during the engagement with no effect other than in bolstering up their morale with their loud report. The machine guns were sited to shoot in one direction only and were not traversed. During the engagement, the bandits held their position until we almost over-ran them and dug them out from their cover one by one. Nearly all of the fighting was at close quarters. The accompanying sketch gives a fair idea of the organization of the ambush. Several shallow trenches were made along the sandy shelf above the overhanging cliff and thick bamboo bush at "B" which acted as a natural barrier on the down river side. The trench farthest down stream as well as that near the ninety degree bend in the river were sited to cover any advance up-river. The others were separated by intervals approximately equal to the distance between the boats of our column and overlooked the river. Up the hill in rear of these trenches there was another series of fox holes, each occupied by one or two men, and behind them, a third row near the crest of the hill. Trails had been cut leading into the position from the up-river side so that there was no indication of the ambush when approaching from the north. The position on the right bank was similary prepared except that it was farther up hill from the edge of the river and consisted of only two small trenches. It was evident that the outlaws expected my entire patrol to be in boats and that the plan was to let the patrol enter the ambush before it would be engaged by rifle fire and hand grenades from the selected position opposite each boat and on the bank above it, the machine guns to enfilade the boats as they drifted down-stream with the current. Except for my shore patrols, it would undoubtedly have succeeded.

The following report was written that night to the Commanding Officer, Eastern Area, and sums up the day's events as they appeared to me at that time:

"8607—Have the following to report: At 1312 this date, made contact with band of about 60 bandits, thought to be of Jiron's force, three quarters of a mile above this place—where planes made contact and



dropped supplies. The engagement was fought on both sides of the river and lasted until 1600. At that time contact was lost, the bandits withdrawing to the west. To unite my force, it was necessary to drop back to this place, contact between the forces operating on either side of river having been entirely lost.

"Our casualties consist of following: Killed in action, about 1530—Private Meyer Stengel, as result of dum dum bullet entering right breast at nipple. Wounded—Sgt. Melvin A. Mosier, Sgt. Russel Schoneberger, Drm. Thomas E. Paine.

"Enemy casualties: 10 killed, 3 wounded.

"The majority of bandits were armed with Remington 1916 (Russian) rifles. They had two machine guns emplaced and one automatic rifle.

"There were no casualties among the Indian boatmen. They were under fire twice and conducted themselves exceptionally well.

"I am returning the three wounded to Bocay tonight. Immediate hospitalization for Mosier shot through left breast, and Paine, shot through neck, is absolutely necessary. Schoneberger is wounded in left arm, with bullet still unextracted. Am sending Stengel's body to Bocay for interment.

"Pvt. Binkley is being returned as guard—sore feet and unfit for duty.

"Am advancing tomorrow at daybreak to next house and possibly to Espanolita. There is no good defensive position this side of Mastawas. If forced to withdraw, will dig in there.

"This place is only one day's hike from Sandino's stronghold on the Poteca River.[34] Espanolita is but three hours from mouth of trail connecting with his camp. From papers found, I believe his entire force has concentrated and that we can expect a large body, probably tomorrow. Planes should make contact with us daily.

"Please give following your immediate attention: I have no medical supplies or instruments. Drop following as soon as possible: Iodine, gauze, bandages, absorbent cotton, adhesive tape, hypodermic syringe, complete with needles and dope, one pocket case of instruments. We could not treat wounds today because of no supplies. This needs immediate action.

"Morale of command: Excellent. Every man did all that could be expected. 2215."[35]

In February, 1929, Jiron was captured by a patrol from the Northern Area and the following is extracted from the statement made by him concerning this engagement:

"About two weeks after the Hunter contact at Zapote, on May 13th, Sandino moved his headquarters to Wamblan. He established an out-post under Jiron about two miles east (down stream) from Ililiquas, with a second outpost still further down stream under Montoya.

"When information was received that a Marine patrol was moving up the river, Montoya's outpost was withdrawn, except a few caretakers for the camp. Jiron was ordered to withdraw to Ililiquas, where he was to give battle. He then had 30 men with rifles and one Lewis machine gun. Sandino was to support Jiron with about 30 men, equipped with rifles, one sub-Thompson and two BAR's. Altimirano, with a force of about equal size, was ordered to block the trail on north side of Coco River which branches off down stream from Ililiquas and runs parallel to river. This was planned to prevent the Marines from outflanking the bandit defensive position.

"Jiron wanted to place his troops on the south (right) side of the river where, he claims, there was better cover, better observation and where the river current was too swift to admit of landing from small boats on that side. He had a report that the Marines were pulling up stream in five open boats and he planned to dispose his men in five groups, permit the boats to slightly pass the respective positions of his groups and then open fire. Sandino interfered with his plans and required him to take up a position on the north side of the river.

"As the Marine patrol appeared down the river, Col. Colindres became excited and showed himself. Whereupon the Marines immediately opened fire, drew their boats to shore and pushed home the attack. For some reason unknown to Jiron, Sandino, who, according to plan was to support the defensive position, ran. Jiron found him that night in Wamblan where he had returned to his mistress, Terena Villatoro.

"Jiron heard firing on his left flank, but thought it was Altimirano, knowing that he had been stationed in that direction. He was amazed to find that Marines were closing on his flank and rear. His command was shot to pieces and he narrowly escaped capture, finally reaching Wamblan that night with one man. Jiron lost seven known killed and twelve missing. Three of the missing have been located, but were wounded.

"Sandino had not properly reconnoitered the ground, and did not know that the trail on which he stationed Altimirano was nearly four miles from the river at that point. This blunder dispersed his forces, removed Altimirano from the scene of action at the critical moment and gave Jiron a false sense of security on his flank. There was a bitter quarrel as a result—Jiron and Sandino blaming each other for the defeat. After this was patched up, Jiron was made Chief of Staff."[36]

From a study of the above, it is believed that it was the troops under Sandino who were seen and bombed by Lieutenant Conway at "G" on the seventh, and that this airplane attack was instrumental in causing Sandino to withdraw to Wamblan without supporting Jiron later that afternoon. It is probable that Altimirano was to block the trail "H" leading from the banana patch across the river from Ililiquas and that instead he was somewhere along the trail "K" during the fight. Had he been at "H" as planned and come into action at that place, engaging us in our rear, he could have made it extremely embarrassing. As it was, he did not show up in that area until just before dark.

The moon rose the night of the seventh-eighth of August at about midnight. A little after one o'clock, Binkley, the three wounded men and Stengel's body were place aboard our largest pitpan and, with an Indian crew of two, started down river for Bocay. The trip was made without mishap and they arrived at that place just before noon on the morning of the eighth. Two amphibian planes had just landed and the wounded men were immediately transported by air to Puerto Cabezas, where they were hospitalized in less than twenty-four hours from the time they were wounded. All three of them recovered. Mosier and Schone-

[34]Author's note: It was actually two days' travel, about twenty-five miles.

[35]FIELD MESSAGE No. 2, from Coco Patrol at Ililiquas, Nic., to CO EASTERN AREA, dated 7 August, 1928.

[36]MEMORANDUM, undated, "Capture of Genral Manuel Maria Jiron and Information Obtained from Him," issued by R-2, NORTHERN AREA, Ocotal, Nicaragua.

berger are still in the Marine Corps and Paine is, I believe, working in or near Boston, Mass.

At about three o'clock in the morning, I was awakened and informed that a group of bandits had been discovered on the trail down river from us. I investigated and decided that this information was correct. My force had been reduced to forty-one men. I had lost my two senior non-commissioned officers, the only sergeants with the patrol. I had received a position report placing Lieutenant Cook's detachment near the foot of the Callejon Rapids. He could not reach Ililiquas in less than four days. Although I knew that we had inflicted a much greater percentage of casualties on the bandits with whom we had been engaged than we had suffered, I was certain that we had been fighting only one group of the total outlaw forces available in that area. So long as I could keep them in front of me, I did not consider that I had much to worry about. However, if they should so dispose their forces as to take me from both front and rear, my small patrol would be in a bad way. Also, Lieutenant Cook's detachment, traveling in only two boats, one of them equipped with outboard motors, was considered to be especially vulnerable to ambush and rough treatment if the outlaws should interpose a group between us. It seemed best to me to effect a junction with Cook before proceeding farther up-river so, just before dawn, my patrol embarked and drifted down stream to Mastawas.

On the eighth of August, two planes from Managua made contact with us. From that day on, except for occasional supply missions from Puerto Cabezas, all of our air support came from Managua. We had advanced so far inland that there was a difference of an hour and a half's flying time in favor of the planes from the west coast.

Cook and his detachment arrived late on the afternoon of August ninth and the advance up the river was resumed the following morning. On the fourteenth, we lay over at Espanolita for the day while two patrols were sent down river to investigate the territory to our rear through which we had just passed. At about eight o'clock, one of these patrols made contact with a small group of bandits under the command of Abram Rivera, commissioned a Colonel and Chief Cargador by Sandino. He was bringing supplies which had been taken from the Pis Pis mines and cached near Garrobo on the Bocay River when the bandits had left that place in May and he was to turn them over to Sandino in the vicinity of Poteca. As a result of this contact, four bandits were killed, one wounded and Rivera himself was captured. A half hour later, another small patrol sent up river from our encampment made contact with a group of outlaws reconnoitering the trail toward us. Perhaps the most important result of these two contacts was the capture of Rivera's cargo, which contained hats, clothing and shoes. These were turned over to my men to replace their own worn out uniforms. Every man was down to the articles which he wore on his back. Many were hatless; underwear was unknown; shirts and trousers were tattered and torn; and the shoes of several men were so broken that cloth was used as inner linings to protect the feet. Add to that the fact that no one had shaved in over a month and one can imagine what a fine looking outfit we were.

We reached Poteca on the morning of the seventeenth. Although the name was printed on the existing maps in large letters and indicated a settlement of considerable importance, we found only one house located at the junction of the Poteca and Coco Rivers, the walls constructed of mahogany, the roof tiled—with a large hole in the middle of it where one of our aviators had made a direct hit with a thirty pound bomb—and a dirt floor, with an old sow as the single occupant. Its position dominated the Poteca and Coco Rivers. The river below the clearing passed through a narrow, deep canyon which offered the best place for an ambush above the Callejon Rapids. I, for one, was certainly glad that the bandits had chosen to defend at Ililiquas instead of Poteca, for the latter would have been infinitely more difficult to attack.

There had been no contact with the outlaws since the fourteenth. Every indication, confirmed by air reconnaissance and such meager reports as we could get from an Indian boatman who had been with Sandino and who was captured on the sixteenth, pointed to the fact that the bandits had been driven out of the valley and has dispersed in small groups to the northwest, west and south. What we had accomplished was summarized in a Brigade report to the Major General Commandant:

"The advance up the Coco was laboriously continued. Two more small contacts were had. Finally, Edson reached Poteca on August 17, 1928, having inflicted the following known outlaw casualties:

"Fourteen killed, four wounded (escaped), five taken prisoners; and having captured a total of 54 firearms.

"From the standpoint of difficulty, danger, isolation from friendly ground troops, and accomplishments, this small expedition is without parallel in the hard work done by this Brigade."[37]

We had, then, successfully completed the more difficult part of our mission, "to proceed up the Coco River, to drive the bandits from the river valley, destroying such groups as we might encounter, to take . . .Poteca." There still remained the task of establishing a base at that place, four hundred and seventy miles from our source of supplies, and to continue patrolling to the southwest to form a junction with patrols from the Northern Area in the vicinity of Santa Cruz.

[37]THE SAGA OF THE COCO; by Major Edwin North McClellan, U.S.M.C.; p. 77, The Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. XV, No. 3, November, 1930.

"CATERPILLAR" ANNOUNCES TWO NEW GRADERS

■ Two new blade graders, in 12-foot and 10-foot sizes, have been added to the "Caterpillar" grader line. These new models have single member frames and will be known as No. 66 Single Frame and No. 44 Single Frame, since they are in the same weight classes as the No. 66 and No. 44 Double Frame models. They are offered in both power and hand control.

These new machines are designed particularly for combination work in which quick movement of the blade from ditching position to the high rank cutting position is important. With the power controlled models less than one minute is required to move the blade from one of these positions to the other, and with any of the models this may be done without offsetting the blade on the