

EVACUEE REPORTS-

ASHTON, COURTLAND A.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA  
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION GENERAL STAFF

APD 500  
11 August 44

Philippine Evacuee Report #346

Subject : NEGROS  
From : Courtland Earl ASHTON

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Name : Courtland Earl Ashton ✓  
Born : 25 August 1902 in Arco, Idaho  
Education : University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1925-29  
Occupation : Superintendent of North Negros Sugar Company, Manapla, Negros Occidental  
Service : Joined the guerrilla army 20 September 1942 in the Cadiz, Negros area. Served as Acting First Lieutenant.  
Assignment : Served as the S-4 in Sub-Sector "G" and later at Divisional Headquarters under Colonel MATA.  
In PI ; Since 18 March 1941

Interrogated by G-2 GHQ SWPA

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Although Mr Ashton had lived in the Philippine Islands only a short time prior to the outbreak of the war, it is believed that his apparent understanding of the Filipino race is better than of the average person because of 17 years spent in Hawaii where he was in constant contact with Filipinos. Mr Ashton is more tolerant and less critical in his views than most American evacuees concerning the manner in which the Filipinos are handling the problems which confront them. It is believed that the information given by him is reliable.

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CHRONOLOGY

- 18 Mar 41 - Arrived in PI and assumed duties as Superintendent of North Negros Sugar Company, Manapla, Negros Occidental.
- May 42 - Evacuated to the mountains with wife. Had previously prepared incendiary bags so as to destroy the sugar mill but failed to carry out plan because the army had left Manapla before the Japanese got there and he was not given any instructions for the demolition of the plant.
- 20 Sep 42 - Joined the guerrillas as a 1st Lieutenant. Stationed in Sub-Sector "G" as the S-4.
- Sep 42-Nov 43 - Served as the S-4 under Captain Emilio BEDAN. During this period the guerrillas were active in ambushing small Japanese patrols and destroying bridges.



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1 Nov 43  
to Jun 44

- Transferred to Divisional Headquarters and became the CO of the Chemical Warfare Company. Helped in obtaining supplies and transporting same to the different areas. Also taught in the Service School, giving lectures on defense against chemical warfare.

21 Jun 44

- Evacuated to Australia.

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#### Guerrilla Organization

While the organization has many faults, it is believed that it is as good as can be expected under the circumstances. It is true that the officers are political appointees, but there is no way to circumvent this or improve the situation. The trouble is that there are very few men on the island who have had sufficient experience to qualify themselves as officers.

Colonel ABCEDE, Colonel MATA, and Colonel AUSEJO are good, sincere officers. They have done all that is possible to improve the organization by replacing the most incompetent officers with others who have shown signs of leadership.

The lack of leadership has had its effect on the enlisted men who feel that they should not be expected to act as well disciplined soldiers since their superiors are so obviously incompetent.

In an effort to improve the organization, three different service schools are being conducted. Since these schools were first started in November of 1943 there has been a noticeable improvement. The men are better disciplined, more determined to oppose the enemy, and are more conscious of the duties of a soldier, especially is this true in regard to the reporting of any intelligence information.

**GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES** : The guerrilla ambushes of Japanese patrols constitute only a small part of the work carried on by them. In addition to making nuisance raids, which have required the Japanese to maintain garrisons, the guerrillas have developed a fairly reliable intelligence network, have influenced the people not to cooperate with the Japanese or join the Neighborhood Associations, and have been of tremendous help in keeping up the morale of the civilians.

#### Personnel Requirements

There is no doubt but what most of the officers would resent the presence of American officers, but it is believed that Colonel Abcede and Colonel Mata would welcome them. Mr Ashton says that he has discussed the problem with both Abcede and Mata and he concluded that they realized that American officers would be needed in order to get the maximum benefit from the guerrilla organization.

In order for American officers to accomplish the desired results it would be necessary that they be high ranking officers so as to command the respect of the officers and men.

Mr Ashton says that the enlisted men would be glad to have some experienced sergeants train and lead them in combat against the enemy. Many of them feel that they could make a much better showing if they only had some leaders with combat experience who could be depended on.

It is very doubtful that the Hawaiian-Filipino officers would be able to get along in Negros. However, the Hawaiian-Filipino soldiers would probably be welcomed by both the officers and the men.

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General Information Living in the free areas is done only under extreme hardships. The bare necessities of life are difficult to obtain. The problem has been made more difficult by inflation which has resulted from the army's wasteful expenditure of money. The articles which are available can be bought only by a comparatively few civilians and high ranking officers because of the exorbitant prices.

The problem of feeding the people as well as the army is difficult because of the lack of transportation. In some areas there is an abundance of food, while in others, there is such a scarcity that the people are faced with starvation.

Though the propaganda efforts of the Japanese have been successful at times, the Japanese themselves have been responsible for turning the people against them by terror tactics and atrocities. It is believed that those who have apparently been collaborating with the Japanese are doing so only because it is the easiest way to get by at the present time. The big majority of them, including the members of the Bureau of Constabulary, will turn against the Japanese when the American forces first arrive in the Philippines.

Civil Government The government is functioning as well as can be expected under the circumstances. There is no doubt but what some of the officials, as well as some of the officers in the army, are guilty of grafting and are feathering their own nests while they can. This has been made possible by the printing of so much money and by the inefficient manner that it is presently being handled.

Proper cooperation does not exist between the government and the army. This has resulted in petty quarrels, bidding against one another in the purchase of food, and a lowering of public morale.

Among other functions, the local government officials give out the pensions to the pensionados, serve on the currency committees, give the army its allotments, operate the civil courts, and attempt, with varying success, to collect 20% of the crops for the use of the Government and the army.

Future Problems The Japanese are expected to leave agents behind in any territory taken by the American forces. That the Filipinos are willing to serve as Japanese spies has been amply proven during the past two years. The Japanese have been able to hire innumerable Filipinos to act as spies on the guerrillas and as a result they have been able to know exactly what they were doing. There is no reason to believe that they will experience any difficulty in obtaining agents in the future.

The known Japanese collaborators will not have a chance of survival once the invasion begins. The big danger in this respect is to prevent the wanton killing of innocent people because of personal grudges against those people living in the occupied towns who have done only that which was absolutely necessary in order to get by.

ROXAS : Seems to be the most popular man in the Philippines.

VARGAS : Though he was popular at first, he is now regarded as being pro-Japanese.

INDEPENDENCE : In many discussions on the question of independence, no one was ever heard to say that he wanted the Philippines to receive full independence. The people now realize how hopeless their position would be without the aid of the United States.

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