

EVACUEE REPORTS:

REYES, D. S.

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GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA

CHECK SHEET

(Do not remove from attached sheets)

File No.:

Subject:

From: G-2

To: 1) G-3 *Dak*
2) Gen. Stivers *PS*
3) Civil Affairs Section, USAFFE
4) Gen. Valdes

Date: 7 December 1944

Attached report prepared by Capt. REYES, P.A., recently arrived at Tacloban. The LAPUS-ESCUADERO dispute was caused by misunderstandings. Neither was sure of his position, and welcomed outside support. The tacit support of LAPUS by PERALTA and ESCUDERO by Luzon guerrillas encouraged each one. Neither of the supporters had authority to act for GHQ. Both LAPUS and ESCUDERO acted in good faith. See the G-2 Information Bulletin "The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Bicol Area", dated 7 November 1944, for details on the LAPUS-ESCUADERO dispute.

C.A.W.
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UNITED STATES PHILIPPINE ISLANDS FORCES
FIFTH MILITARY DISTRICT
HQ. 54TH INFANTRY
IN THE FIELD

5 December 1944

SUBJECT: Report

TO : A. C. of S., G-2, GHQ-SWPA

1. In compliance with the order given verbally by the A. C. of S. G-2, GHQ-SWPA the following history of the 54th Infantry Regiment, USPIF, 5MD, commanded by Major L. P. LAPUS, Inf. (O-1200 PA), its conflict with Governor ESCUDERO of Sorsogon and other pertinent information including pro-Jap activities, the following report is respectfully submitted:

(1) BRIEF HISTORY - When the war broke out on 8 December 1941, Major L. P. LAPUS, Inf., was the Provincial Inspector for Sorsogon province and in command of the forces therein mainly the Philippine Constabulary. On 12 December 1941, when Legaspi was invaded by the enemy, he received coded instructions from USAFFE Hqtrs, Manila, to bring his troops to the mountains and there wait for aid. He complied with that instruction. Seeing, however, the oppression by the enemy upon civilians and endeavoring to help the fight in Bataan and Corregidor, he engaged the enemy in guerilla warfare, the first shot fired as early as in February, 1942, somewhere in the town of Gubat, resulting in the death of one EM and several enemy casualties including the first Filipino collaborator in the province. Isolated from USAFFE Hqtrs and without means of communicating with it, Major LAPUS personally contacted Col. CORNELL of the Leyte-Samar sector sometime in February or March, 1942, who extended him some aid and authority to expand his unit into full war-time strength. When he returned to Sorsogon, MAJOR LAPUS increased the tempo of his resistance, and engagements with the enemy one after another followed, notably those along the highway from Sorsogon to Legaspi and in the towns of Pilar, Castilla, Sorsogon, Bacon and Juban. In one engagement during this period, that at Beriran, Juban, not less than 40 enemy killed, with many others wounded, were accounted for.

Major SANDICO, Inf., Provincial Inspector for Albay province when the war broke out then sought Major LAPUS and together with other officers from Albay were inducted into the USAFFE, given funds, and told to organize immediately the resistance in Albay. After the fall of Bataan and Corregidor not less than three thousand Japanese soldiers flocked over into Sorsogon to look for Major LAPUS and his men. Under such circumstances of difficulty, Major LAPUS split his men, ordered them to hide in the hills and mountains, and retained only few EM with him.

Meantime, the campaign against Jap spies and collaborators went unabated carried out by EM who entered towns and villages disguised as civilians. In December 1942, or early in January, 1942, Major LAPUS was contacted by Lt. LOMERO, Inf. (PS) who came from the camp of Lt-Col STRAUGHN in central Luzon. Lt. LOMERO suggested an extended trip to the South and Major LAPUS financed his trip to Panay to contact the organization there and make his report. Lt. LOMERO's trip was successful, his arrival back in Luzon closely followed by Sgt. JESUS ORTIZ, Inf., who brought an authorization from the 4th Philippine Corps for Major LAPUS to organize in the 5MD a regiment. Relations with Panay took a headlong start from May, 1943, but severed in February or

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March 1944, when Major LAPUS contacted Major CHAS. E. SMITH, CE, AUS, who extended Major LAPUS a radiogram from GHQ-SWPA, dated 6 March 1944 addressed to Major LAPUS which told him to organize secretly and quietly and do mainly intelligence work. Before that, in order to be sure of how he stands officially, Major LAPUS contacted Col. RUPERTO KANGLEON, C.O., 9MD, who advised him to run his unit independently and in good faith and cautioned him against unnecessary interference by others in matters of internal administration. He also contacted Lt-Col. BERNARD L. ANDERSON, USA, in central Luzon, who also informed him that all his official acts made in good faith will be backed up by the Washington Government.

As early as the grant of authority from the 4th Philippine Corps, which he honestly believed was acting with proper authority from GHQ-SWPA, Major LAPUS set up an intelligence network of operatives and agents not only in the Bicol provinces but also in Manila and all provinces South of Manila, and periodically submitted his intelligence reports to Pany - on enemy land situation every end of month, and on naval and aerial movements every fortnight. When Major LAPUS connected himself with Major SMITH for intelligence purposes, he continued sending his S-2 reports until relations between him and Major SMITH were ruptured as will be shown herein-after.

(2) MAJOR LAPUS AND GOVERNOR ESCUDERO, RELATIONS BETWEEN - From the inception of the resistance in Sorsogon, both carried on finely cooperating with one another until about May, 1943. The Governor during that period concerned himself with procuring rice for the soldiers and patrolling the barrios to maintain peace and order. In return for his good cooperation and patriotic endeavor, Major LAPUS gave him fifteen (15) rifles and two (2) automatic rifles for his protection and tolerated him in confiscating shot-guns and revolvers from civilian holders.

Up to the time of their break, and until very recently, the Governor never engaged for once the enemy in combat. In December, 1942, Governor ESCUDERO was visited by one ROS CRISOLDO DE LA PAZ who said he was one of three (3) US Army Officers left behind to organize the people in case of capture of the Islands by the enemy. Later investigation showed he was a mere civilian, radio spare parts agent before this war, and known as a racketeer, with connections after the capture of Legaspi with the Japanese Military Police therein. DE LA PAZ and Governor ESCUDERO put up what they called CEC, meaning Civilian Engineering Corps; master-mind DE LA PAZ afterward contacted Lt-Col. STRAUGHN who issued prompt appointments in their favor as Colonels, Infantry. Campaign for monetary contributions was started, and it is believed thousands of pesos were collected. Letters were then issued by DELA PAZ and Governor ESCUDERO to the soldiers of Major LAPUS couched in military language, invariably ending with: "BY ORDER OF THE HIGH COMMAND." Some soldiers believed in them and gave them their arms; others who refused to surrender to them their arms were cold-bloodedly murdered. When Major LAPUS asked in writing the Governor for the surrender to him of the murderers, who were with the Governor, he not only refused to do so but challenged Major LAPUS. On behalf of Major LAPUS, Capt. LUIS J. LAREZA, QMS, saw the Governor to deliver the written demand of Major LAPUS for the arms of the Army; the reply of Governor ESCUDERO was they can only be taken over his dead body. Since then, aggression by the Governor one after another followed.

(3) EFFORTS AT UNIFICATION - Believing that criminal

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action can later on be taken against the culprits, Major LAPUS made several attempts to come half-way in the execution of his duties in order to prevent factional strife in Sorsogon province. He sent several letters to Governor ESCUDERO which were all either ignored or replied with open challenges. On two occasions, representatives of Major LAPUS, mostly Officers, met Gov. ESCUDERO's representatives and finally the Governor himself for purposes of unification, but on every occasion several of the officers were murdered. One of those murdered was an ex-Bataan Officer, another an old Constabulary man who had served seventeen (17) years, but what was really regrettable was the demise on such occasion of an Officer who, before this war, made known his country, the Philippines, in the World Olympic Games. Under-Sec. of National Defense TEODOSIO R. DINO tried to intervene to effect unity. He not only was unsuccessful, but Governor ESCUDERO told him that nobody else can stop him. Several prominent civilians intervened, to no avail; one of them, a noted educator, talked to the Governor for reconciliation between him and Major LAPUS, but the Governor replied that in times of war guns and not words decide the issues or differences. In the interest of unification, Panay sent representatives and addressed several communications to Governor ESCUDERO reminding him that he should cooperate, and in one of them that he cannot be both Governor and Military Leader, to which the Governor turned cold shoulders.

Even Major RUSSEL D. BARROS, Inf., USA, representing Col. BERNARD L. ANDERSON, USA, guerilla leader in central Luzon, tried to intervene and effect unification in Sorsogon province only to be insulted by Lt. BURGUS T. SAYOC, MC, now "LT-COL." (self-assumed) and C. of S. of Governor ESCUDERO. Major BARROS reported his findings and made recommendations to both Col. PERALTA and Major SMITH, undoubtedly believing that eventually they will find their way to GHQ-SWPA. Major BARROS called the whole issue as one of POLITICS vs. ARMY, and recommended for stern action by GHQ-SWPA to settle once and for all the strife, believing that such action will be obeyed by all the military leaders of the Bicol provinces.

(4) SPHERES OF CONTROL OF MAJOR LAPUS AND GOV. ESCUDERO - Governor ESCUDERO's terroristic ways will make it difficult for an observer to determine the swing of the people, or their sentiments. The civilians in towns and villages under his control are afraid to talk, - a great number of them had to migrate to others places, but the records of the Army is quite full of accounts from a number of them. In one instance, one whole family including the smallest children were all killed by the men of Gov. ESCUDERO because they were suspected of giving support to Major LAPUS; probably not less than fifty (50) civilians have been killed by Governor ESCUDERO's group on slight suspicions of helping the Army. Governor ESCUDERO even has written several prominent and rich people in Sorsogon that he will have them liquidated, meaning killed if he finds them giving shelter or food to Major LAPUS or any in his family. He is said and he claims to be in control of the eastern coastal towns of Sorsogon province, including the inland town of Irosin. The fact is, those places have been purposely abandoned by the Army having no military importance, or objectives. The Army has its "C" Co., 1st Bn., in Gubat, made up of servicemen and ex-service men, many with battle engagements in Luzon prior to the surrender of the USAFFE; seventy-six (76) EM, including Officers, from Bulusan and Barcelona, are in those municipalities; and "D" Co., 1st Bn., in Irosin, composed of regular soldiers, many of whom are Bataan veterans, - all of these soldiers in the towns of the eastern seaboard of Sorsogon are in disguise. The whole of the western coast-

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line of the province, including the capital and the biggest town and chief port of Bulan, are rigidly within control of the Army. In Albay province, Sgt. ANTE, who has been appointed "Major" by Governor ESCUDERO, has his following merely on paper. In Camarines Sur, the unit of Capt. MIRANDA, commonly called and known as "Major" MIRANDA, has long been affiliated with Major LAPUS, and the same unit forms the 2nd Battalion of the 54th Infantry.

(5) MAJOR SMITH AND MAJOR LAPUS - There have been unhappy incidents between the two, not the creation of Major LAPUS. Relations between them have been strained by -

(a) Major SMITH sent his outfit to Ticao Island to operate there a X-mitter. When the Japanese penetrated the island they turned yellow, left behind Major LAPUS who was then in the island, and proceeded on their own initiative to the town of Magdalena in the mainland of Masbate Province. They were caught there by the Japanese, and Major SMITH believed they had been neglected by Major LAPUS.

(b) Major SMITH gave some funds to Major LAPUS for intelligence operations. Not having a transmitter, Major LAPUS had to send his reports by banca. In April or May the Officer carrying the reports was delayed on the way because of the Japanese penetration in Samar. Major SMITH boiled over, called the reports useless - undoubtedly referring to their being late, and refused to pay Major LAPUS for over-expenses, despite the agreement between them and the requests from the latter.

(c) Major SMITH indiscreetly has been telling his subordinate officers and other officers passing by his CP that Major LAPUS is a racketeer, a cheat and other nasty things. This came to Major LAPUS' knowledge, and he resented it resulting in a hot letter from him to Major SMITH.

(d) The X-mitter, supplies and money sent by GHQ-SWPA to Major LAPUS were never received by him, because they were captured by the Japanese while in the hands of Major SMITH. When Major LAPUS sent for them, Major SMITH boiled over attributing the loss to Major LAPUS' delay.

(e) One Lt. AGGAILI bringing supplies for the contingent of Major SMITH in Bondoc sank off Camarines Sur; was saved by the men of Capt. BONAVIE, one of the Officers of Major LAPUS with station there; detained for a time for routinary inspection and investigation; given every possible aid; finally sent to accomplish his mission under escort of Capt. LUIS J. LAREZA, QMS. Despite all this help, Major SMITH resented the act and, according to information, has issued a warrant for the arrest of Major LAPUS.

(6) GROUP COMPOSITION -

(a) The 54th Infantry Regiment, USPIF, 5MD, commanded by Major LAPUS has been functioning ever since, organized as an Army Unit, observing all Army rules and regulations and the Articles of War, whose Officers are regular Army officers, duly commissioned reservists and ROTC graduates. About ninety per cent (90%) of its officers have university education and a great number of them professionals. Many of them are Bataan veterans. With respect to such matters, we beg leave to refer GHQ



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to Col. BERNARD L. ANDERSON, USA, or Major RUSSEL D. BARROS, USA, who have knowledge of our Unit, particularly the latter who has gone to our camps and had opportunity to observe. Reference can also be made to Lt. (J.G.) WILBUR S. DEMING, USNR, Naval pilot, attached to the 3rd Fleet, who was saved in Legaspi by our boys after he was forced down, and who requested to visit our camps and observe our organization. He is at present in the Naval Headquarters, Tacloban.

(b) Governor ESCUDERO has for his division staff the following:

- (1) "Lt. Col." BURGOS T. SAYOC, MC, Chief of Staff, who before joining the Governor was reprimanded severely by Major LAPUS for unbecoming conduct and abuses;
- (2) "Major" ALFREDO OCAMPO, who took part in the lootings in Sorsogon, the Capital, when the war broke out and has long been on the wanted list of the Army for the commission of crimes;
- (3) "Major" ANTONIO ESCUDERO, son of the Governor;
- (4) "Major" DANIEL ANDIA, wanted by the Army for the murder of one ANTONIO NICOLAS, before the present split in the province;
- (5) "Major" ANDES, a PC Sergeant, Inf., who was discharged before this War;
- (6) "Major" MANUEL OLONDRIZ, nephew of Gov. ESCUDERO;
- (7) "Major" RAMON OLBES, PMA Graduate, who applied twice by letter to Major LAPUS for admission into his Unit, but for unknown reasons is now with the Governor.

OTHER OFFICERS:

(8) "Captain" MAURICIO GAPAN, who deserted his unit in Bataan in February 1942, went to Leyte, came to Sorsogon, and long wanted by the Army for falsely telling the people that he came from Bataan with orders from General FRANCISCO to Major LAPUS, that the latter must surrender to the enemy.

(9) "Captain" NICASIO DISCAYA against whom Major LAPUS had prepared Court Martial charges for cowardice in action long before he joined Governor ESCUDERO;

(10) "Lt." LEODEGARIO VICTORINO, who was facing trial for rape of a school girl during daytime on the grand-stand of the Provincial High School, before the war broke out.

Governor ESCUDERO's files represent a group who are no less patriotic than other Filipinos but who are just being misled by their leader.

(7) CHARGES:

(a) Without intending to press on the charges at this moment, the 54th Infantry Regiment, USPIF, 5MD, is in actual possession of documentary evidences, and has direct witnesses, to support that:

(1) Governor ESCUDERO has been guilty of treason by directly aiding the enemy by being in connivance with him in exchange for protection and ammunitions with which he killed soldiers of the Army; by giving to the enemy the list of the soldiers of the Army; and by harboring and keeping in his protection traitors wanted by the Army, including the notorious "KEMPIS" as well as a number of persons wanted by the 93rd Division, 9 MD, for collaborating with the enemy, and who are now enjoying the protection of the Governor. (This is of public knowledge; belatedly, when in September American planes showed up, Governor ESCUDERO started "fighting" the "enemy".)

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(2) Governor ESCUDERO has illegally appropriated the private property of soldiers and civilians, which he confiscated on unjust and illegal grounds during this war.

(3) Governor ESCUDERO has committed many murders.

(4) Governor ESCUDERO collected in 1942 three thousand (3,000) sacks of palay (uncleaned rice) from loyal civilians, as donations, of which only three hundred (300) sacks were turned over to the Army;

(5) Governor ESCUDERO sold, for his own use and benefit, in Samar all that remained of the gasoline of the Government after the outbreak of the war;

(6) Governor ESCUDERO collected the cash from the municipal safes upon the outbreak of this war, caused Postmasters to issue money orders which were ante-dated.

(b) Major LAPUS desires to make it known to the High Command that all the things which have transpired between him and Major SMITH are open to inspection, investigation or trial.

(c) We do not intend to present now formally our complaints to proper authority, but will wait until the present war is over.

(8) OUR OFFICIAL ATTITUDE -

(a) We are for union and we have always endeavored with our best to attain this end. We believe with our full hearts that all must share, irrespective of beliefs and prejudices in our daily lives, in the great final effort to achieve victory in this war. The common cause for which we are fighting in this war will always be over and above our own personal convenience and safety; our own institutions and ways of life that, to us, must symbolize the Christianity and civilization which we have inherited from our forbears, shall no more be prejudiced by our personal differences than we should stake life itself for nothing.

(b) We will assert our birth-right to serve our Mother Country to the very grim end. As a military unit, we will observe to the letter all military superior orders even in the exercise of that birth-right.

(9) REQUEST - We are on our knees pleading for aid in arms, ammunitions, medicines and clothes and we will stake our life in a pledge of honor that it shall ever be away from our thought, as enlightened patriotic citizens, to use any of those in killing fellow Filipinos. They will be used, with our lives, in driving away from our shores our common enemy.

For Major LAPUS (0-1200 PA):

D. S. Reyes

D. S. REYES
Capt., Inf.

Provost Inspector, 54th Inf.
(On Special Mission to GHQ- SWPA)

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