

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT-GENERAL,
Bell's Expeditionary Brigade.

SIR: I have the honor to say that my command crossed the river at Pauli at 6 a. m. this morning and was menaced while the men were there eating their breakfast. After breakfast the command became engaged about a mile from the river, with a rice plain to the right and some detached hills about 300 feet high to the left of the road. It was a long-range running fight, Mausers predominating, the enemy numbering apparently 300, but extending considerably over a mile of front. The affair closed at this place at 11.30 a. m., with my men completely exhausted. We have not investigated the rice field, where the enemy appeared in greatest force, the net being too tired and the day intensely hot. Three of the enemy's dead are along the road. One small brass field gun was captured and some of its ammunition.

At 3 p. m. a flag of truce brought the inclosed communications. I forward a copy of my answer, and have told the messenger that my operations would not be suspended on account of these negotiations, and that I was going to Baao this afternoon. To this he consented and proposes to go with me. Of course, I should do nothing to embarrass these negotiations, which I believe are proposed in good faith. Mr. Oñate, the messenger who goes with me to Baao, says the Spanish prisoners are in Baao. I start for Baao at once, where I shall await your action.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. H. DORST,
Colonel Forty-fifth Infantry, U. S. V.

HDQRS. FORTY-FIFTH INFANTRY, U. S. V.,
Iriga, February 28, 1900.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT-GENERAL,
Bell's Expeditionary Brigade, Nueva Caceres.

SIR: I have the honor to report that my command arrived at Baao on the evening of the 25th instant, about 6 p. m. Next morning early I was visited by Señor Antonio Ortiz, lieutenant-colonel and secretary of the rebel General Guevara, who was accompanied by several civilian officials. With them I marched to Iriga, leaving Major Frederickhauser and two companies at Baao. Iriga was deserted by the rebel forces, but a civil governor of the province received us.

Forty-eight Spanish prisoners, of whom one-half were friars, were found here, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sanz stated that 11 more at Bato would arrive in the afternoon. Reports now indicated that the insurgents had assembled at Buhi.

A company was detached to remain here, where I located my headquarters, and Major Frederick, with his three companies, was ordered to move to Buhi immediately after the midday meal. The latter place is at least 9 miles from here.

During the afternoon the Spanish prisoners from Bato arrived. Major Frederick was delayed until 4 p. m. in getting over a broad, deep, and swift stream, about 4 miles from here, over which there had been a wooden bridge just burned by the rebels and still on fire. Arriving at Buhi about 6 p. m., he found the town deserted. There is a lake at this place, but no outlet to the north and east until after the lake is crossed. The rebels took across the lake all the canoes that could be found, carrying off about 45 Spanish prisoners they have with them.

The inhabitants did not know where the prisoners had been taken, but a Spaniard, an escaped Spanish prisoner, and a native official all said they could find out and get the prisoners back, as the latter were guarded only by a few bowmen.

There was no place to look for them except in a mass of brush-covered mountains, without roads or trails. Major Frederick let them go off alone to hunt the prisoners. I received information last night (27th) that the prisoners had been gathered up by an armed force and taken somewhere to the southeast. He returned to-day with his report, being without rations and without definite idea where the prisoners were. I have been trying to get information about them myself, through confidential sources, but as yet have none.

When the rebels retired after our skirmish on the morning of the 25th they ran into the mountains to the left of the road as you march in this direction; from there they went on to Buhi that night and next morning. I learn from a Spanish prisoner who escaped at Buhi that when Major Frederick approached that place they were very tired and had to be waked up out of a sound sleep in order to retreat. They have probably not more than 20 rounds of ammunition per rifle.

On the afternoon of the 26th I received your reply to the demand for a conference to consider the proposals for a surrender, upon which Lieutenant-Colonel Sanz immediately delivered up his revolver and a Remington rifle and accepted the conditions. I brought him 10 more officers and 2 medical officers have since surrendered themselves. All these officers, as well as the Spanish prisoners here, are to start to-morrow for Nueva Caceres with the troops that brought the provisions here this morning.

The insurgents are reported here on all sides, but there is no doubt they are breaking up and probably some have already gone to Nueva Caceres to surrender. It is said they are afraid to go to Libi, in the Bay of Lagonoy, because the troops at Tobacco are but two hours distant. If they avoid that place they can get nothing much to the north of Buhi until they arrive at Sangay, which is said to be a rebel station. The same is said of Tigaon and Lagonoy, farther to the north on the east side of Mount Isarog. At Mababato they can find large herds of cattle. They can easily be frightened out of those places by one or two companies going around the north side of Isarog. If they come here it would be for the purpose of getting food about here and from Lake Bato down the Bicol River on both sides, particularly the south side, where there is said to be plenty of rice. They are now scattered both up about Isarog and around here.

I can not afford to send men up to Isarog to hunt them there, for the reason that I find the influential town people most friendly and willing to assist, but in mortal terror for their lives, their families, and their property, if the troops are withdrawn. I have troops enough to give confidence in Baao, Iriga, and Buhi, while I use the others to work up the country here and keep the rebels on the move, but none for detached work to the north without abandoning towns, a course that would estrange people who now show friendliest disposition.

To-morrow I send a company to Buhi to remain there. One of the two at Baao will go on with the prisoners as escort as far as Pili and then come here; I shall also send two companies to Palangui. The troops at Buhi and Palangui will about close up this end of the province from both directions, except from Tobacco. In Albay along the coast in three or four days more, I think, there will be marked results, particularly if a small force can be sent around the north side of Isarog.

The Spanish prisoners still in their possession must be taken either there or else brought south in order to subsist.

I have but one medical officer, Major Ireland, and request that at least one more be sent. I would also like to have a larger supply of rations at one time, with mules to carry them. Movements are hampered by having officers and men sick in scattered detachments and with but one or two days' rations at hand. Some of the rations just received I have had to give to Captain Lee's men for their return march, and some I have had to furnish the Spanish prisoners. I would also like an intelligent interpreter. If my Color Sergeant Ballen, who was left aboard the transport *Tartar*, has arrived at Nueva Caceres, he would answer my purpose, as he is a highly educated man, whose native tongue is Spanish.

I think it would be a good plan to send here some well-informed native, who has the confidence of the people, to explain to them what has been done in the other conquered provinces in the way of setting up our government, and how the civil officials and natives have been treated by us.

The relation of what has been done will be the stating of a precedent for their enlightenment.

I am not sufficiently acquainted with the civil administration of affairs to answer the numerous questions asked me, nor have I any interpreters able to carry on any but the most ordinary conversation, and then only on a limited number of topics.

General Guevara, to whom I communicated the conditions under which he would be permitted to surrender, sent me another letter this evening. I inclose it with a copy of my answer. He seems to be about deserted by his men. Lieutenant-Colonel Peña is controlling about all that still hang together, and is somewhere in the direction of Palangui. He is afraid to surrender and afraid to fight. Until his hiding place is discovered and he can be caught, he will probably be able to do us harm.

When the people in the towns get over their present dread of the Tagalos and feel safe in pointing them out to us, the deportation of every Tagal who has been brought into the province by the rebel government would, in my opinion, materially assist in restoring quiet and prosperity.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. H. DORST,
Colonel Forty-fifth Infantry, U. S. V.

12 O'CLOCK MIDNIGHT, FEBRUARY 28—MARCH 1.

Since writing the above the southwest of town has been set on fire and a large number of huts burned. Fortunately a stream of water through that part of town and the absence of a strong wind enabled us to prevent its extending to the interior. To-morrow I shall send no companies to Palangui. On the 3d, however, they will need rations and will have to return here to get them. It seems to me quite 25 miles to Nueva Caceres, and it is said to be a good day's march from here to Palangui; the road from here to that place and to Buhi is impassable for wagons. I respectfully urge more rations at one time. It is stated that the rebels in Albay are also demoralized, and some of them have appeared in this vicinity. There is no report of any movement of our troops behind them.

It is such acts as the attempt to fire the town to-night that terrorizes the peaceable people and makes them beg for troops not to leave them alone in their towns.

There are several warehouses full of hemp here now.

J. H. DORST,
Colonel Forty-fifth Infantry, U. S. V.