

# HEADQUARTERS, U. S. Expeditionary Forces,

## VERA CRUZ, MEXICO,

AUGUST 10, 1914.

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### MEMORANDUM IN REFERENCE TO THE METHODS TO BE EMPLOYED IN THE CAPTURE AND OCCUPATION OF LATIN-AMERICAN CITIES.

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The following discussion, conclusions, etc., are compiled from practical experiences, theoretical studies, the report of a board of officers, and individual views, etc., submitted to these headquarters.

#### 1.—GENERAL STATEMENT.

In any warfare instituted against Latin-Americans our troops will encounter a mode of defense rather foreign to modern tactical teachings and more in accordance with medieval times. These people pursue a style of warfare which consists primarily in the attack and defense of cities. A campaign is seldom executed with the object of destroying the enemy's army. The loss of a city hurts the prestige of the government and the morale of the troops more than the losses of battle.

This method of carrying on war has caused the people to retain the old time principles of defending cities as strongholds and utilizing all available features of cities as a means of prolonging the defense. Therefore street, house and roof fighting by organized and unorganized bodies may be expected in the occupation of any city. A native's patriotism is seldom sufficient to cause him to join his country's organized forces and engage in open battle. Nevertheless custom and his personal hatred of foreigners lead him to follow the mode of fighting inherited from his forefathers, i. e., "sniping" from roof tops, cellars, etc. This method is used especially after the organized forces have been dislodged and the victorious troops are spread out in occupying the town.

With a large organized force the natives will naturally make their primary defensive stands either on some prominent and suitable terrain in the vicinity of the town or at its outer edge. Attacks on such positions are governed by the principles of modern tactics and need no consideration in this memorandum. The ultimate line or period of defense will consist in the house to house fighting mentioned above and is the subject matter considered herein.

## 2.—GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVE.

Success in the primary engagement on the outskirts of the city will be brought about through the usual influences of an enveloping or turning movement. The defenders may be quickly dislodged from their position by such tactics and, in general, will follow one of two courses or a combination of both. They may withdraw beyond the town to some other city and leave the interior defense to the inhabitants, or they may join the inhabitants in the latter action, or, especially in case of a rout, they may divide and follow both lines of action. In any case the victors will find opposition organized and unorganized within the city proper.

In addition to the resistance by organized troops and even when these are lacking, resistance may be looked for from the populace; principally, of course, from the more adventurous spirits—youths, the tough characters who, besides being easily inflamed by low-class leaders, hope to plunder and loot in the confusion and disorganization. The police may be expected to join in the resistance. A certain percentage of the better class of citizens, having an inborn dislike for Americans, will be found willing to risk their lives and property by sniping at our troops.

Owing to the frequent occurrence of political disturbances and revolutions in Latin-American countries, it is the custom of these people and of the Indians, with whom they have mixed, to keep arms concealed in their dwellings and places of business. In view of this custom, it is necessary in taking a Latin-American city to secure all the arms possible from the inhabitants at the very beginning; otherwise sniping will occur for days after the occupation and restoration of order will be considerably delayed. A thorough search of every building is requisite. This search should be carried out during the first movement of occupation, systematically and coincident with the advance, or it will have to be done afterwards spasmodically, at considerable inconvenience, continuing the disturbance of order and the tranquility and confidence of the populace.

Organized firing ceases following the occupation of a town and the withdrawal and dispersion of the enemy. But isolated groups and individuals, well armed, remain on housetops, in towers and in concealment. These snipers, without definite cooperation but upon every favorable opportunity, open an exceedingly dangerous fire, difficult to locate or return. Unless promptly and effectually cleared out this class causes continued annoyance and many casualties. Delivered with extreme deliberation and in almost perfect safety and concealment, the fire of snipers is peculiarly dangerous to patrols and sentinels and prompt and vigorous measures are necessary to protect the occupying troops. In this style of fighting the Mexican combines Indian cunning with a fatalistic disregard of danger and death, which results in exhibitions of bravery and daring. This method is the Mexican's most effective style of fighting. Recent orders and issues of arms by

the Mexican government indicate that it expects to take full advantage of this procedure in the event of war with the United States.

To meet such situations we must make available, if the strength of the command will permit, two forces having separate and distinct duties. The size of these forces is dependent on the numbers engaged and the line of action followed by the unsuccessful defenders. The first or covering force is for the purposes of pursuit, observation on the farther edge of town, surrounding the town, etc. This force will gain its proper position with the least loss of men and time by skirting the town and thus avoiding street fights, etc. There will be many cases where lack of troops or other reasons make it inadvisable to provide a covering force. Whenever such a force is employed, care must be exercised to so use it as not to interfere with, or endanger by its fire, the occupying force. The other force is for the purposes of clearing and occupying the town proper and is the one especially considered in this memorandum.

The covering force acts according to the special situation presented and adopts the methods best suited to each case in accordance with recognized tactical principles. The occupying force has a duty to perform which calls for the methodical use of the troops in accordance with a prearranged and well understood system. The system must be prescribed in detail and all men instructed in its essential features. If the system is well understood and strictly adhered to a saving of life will be guaranteed, as the work will be done thoroughly and instances of friendly troops firing into each other will be avoided.

The prescription of a definite and rigid system for this class of work has no more relation to normal formations than fixed methods of company deployments have to a normal formation for an attack. A system once devised may be employed as circumstances demand, since the adoption of a fixed system limits in no manner the method of its employment. With adherence to a definite system by the smaller organizations their part in the teamwork and cooperation will be assured. Without a fixed method these smaller units will be prompted mainly by a desire to be first at the principal points and the work will not be thoroughly done.

The objective is, of course, the complete occupation of the town and subjugation of its inhabitants. Depending on the resistance encountered, this involves a slow deliberate advance coupled with a careful house to house search for arms.

## 3.—THE ARCHITECTURE AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LATIN-AMERICAN CITIES.

The characteristics of Latin-American cities are:—

First; an approach to a rectangular arrangement of streets.

Second; a system of building construction characterized by rather narrow streets, thick masonry or adobe building walls set close to the sidewalks and without intervals between buildings, flat roofs usually intercommunicating in the same block and frequently having copings which afford cover from fire, large windows and doors, frequently barred, patios, or interior courtyards through which all or nearly all houses in a block may be entered from the rear, and means for reaching roofs by trapdoors. Cellars with apertures opening on the street are also found.

Third; There are usually several large public buildings, in addition to barracks or forts, from which resistance may be expected.

Fourth; There are always large churches of massive construction from which resistance is likely.

Fifth; There is a sprinkling of towers on churches, on public buildings and sometimes on dwelling houses, from which rifle fire and even machine gun fire may be directed—these towers always command a number of neighboring roofs.

Sixth; There are always one or more plazas or public squares about which some of the most important buildings are located and about which resistance is likely to center.

Seventh; In the larger and more up to date cities may be found several buildings such as hotels, office buildings, etc., with some modern improvements, usually under European or American control and occupation, and usually two or three stories higher than other buildings in the city.

Eighth; There may exist some cities of circular shape, but these are the exception—their characteristics as to construction, etc., are similar to the foregoing.

Ninth; On the outskirts of the cities are frequently found cemeteries, chapels, etc., surrounded by stone walls with defensive value.

#### 4.—ACTION OF THE OCCUPYING FORCE.

##### (A) Preliminary Arrangements.

##### (1) Reconnaissance.

Plans of all important Mexican towns are in our possession and should be available in this connection. If such is not the case, a hasty reconnaissance should precede the issuance of orders for the occupation. This reconnaissance is for the purpose of gaining general knowledge of the shape of the town, the general direction of the main streets and information as to special localities such as plazas, barracks, etc., where serious opposition may be expected. There is a pronounced tendency in Latin-American cities toward a frequent change in the names of streets; if an old map is used, troops should be cautioned to locate the streets assigned them by their positions on the map, and not to be misled by a different name on the street corner. A great deal of this important data may be gathered by

the troops during any preliminary engagement on the outskirts of the town. Officers and men should be impressed with the importance of this information and be required to furnish it to the proper officer. In order to insure thoroughness and cooperation, the foregoing information is essential in prescribing the duties of the occupying troops.

The occupying force may be able to carry out its function while the covering force is en route. Except in the case of small villages and unless the time element demands such action, it is believed better to utilize the occupying force, during the preliminary stages, in keeping the enemy engaged on the near edge of town and in performing the reconnaissance mentioned above. The presence of a friendly force on the farther edge of town, properly handled, will facilitate immensely the work of the occupying force.

##### (2) Direction of Advance.

The selection of a desirable side of the town through which the troops will make their first entrance is not always practicable. The deployment for an attack of a position outside of the town and the resulting tactical dispositions of the troops may prohibit the selection of any special side. In any case the following principle must be adhered to as far as practicable. Select and order a line of advance, whether along streets or through building, which will guarantee the movement of all troops in the same direction. This is essential in order to avoid a conversion which might result in interchange of fire between our own troops and also the neglect of some parts of the town. This is a less difficult procedure in rectangular shaped towns than in the circular or irregular forms. In the latter case the method of following along fixed lines, determined by designated features of the town such as church steeples, etc., must be carried out, whether the designated lines follow streets or go through buildings, patios, etc.

##### (3) Orders.

The orders for the occupation should include the plan of action of the whole command, the general direction of the advance, a division of the town into sections, and the assignment of troops to each section, the retention of a reserve, the protection of the flanks, the disposition of prisoners and of the arms found, the use of artillery, etc., and any special features.

##### (4) Sections and Assignments of Troops.

The division lines of the sections should be in the direction of the advance and not at right angles thereto. The sections should be from one side of the town straight through to the other side. This may necessitate long narrow sections, but it will insure unity of command and avoid confusion, etc. Main streets should not be selected for section lines, as a division of authority at such points is undesirable. If the street cannot be definitely described

and used for this purpose, conspicuous features of the town coupled with compass directions will answer.

The width of a section to be assigned to any organization is governed not only by the amount of opposition expected but also by the depth of the section. It must be remembered that the whole occupying force cannot move from one edge of the town to the other. As the advance continues detachments must be left behind to guard that part of the town passed through. The depth is fixed, as the section should run straight through the entire town, and upon this factor depends the width assigned to any organization. For instance, if the depth of a town in direction of the advance averages two miles, a battalion should not ordinarily be assigned a width of more than two streets, i. e., one block and one half of the adjacent blocks. In section assignments streets should be inclusive or exclusive. No method of division should be used which would divide the authority on any particular street.

Each regiment should be assigned a definite section, and in turn should assign certain parts of its section to its battalions, etc. These divisions and subdivisions should follow the principle of having sections, etc., which will extend straight through the town. The battalion should be the basic unit of assignment and execution of the work.

#### **(5) Artillery, Cavalry, Engineers, etc.**

The terrain surrounding the town may afford suitable positions from which artillery and machine gun fire can be directed over the troops against such places as towers, churches and other prominent defensive buildings. Intercommunication between the commanders of the occupying troops and the artillery will permit such use of the latter arm.

Cavalry will be best used with the covering force for flank protection and observation on the farther edge of the town. Cavalry should not be used in the street fighting if other troops are available.

Engineer troops may be valuable in demolition work. Their special equipment fits them for the destructive work frequently required in this mode of attack. If no special function exists for these troops detachments equipped with explosives should be assigned to each infantry regiment. It will be advisable in many cases, to assign to each infantry battalion, a detachment of engineers equipped for escalade. Also in some cases, detachments of engineers equipped for fire fighting should be attached to the reserves of the occupying force.

#### **(6) Reserves.**

The retention of general and local reserves will be governed entirely by the tactical situation. The necessity for flank protection, the possibility of serious encounters in barricaded streets, interior forts, defensive plazas, etc., should be considered in this connection. With a covering force on the flanks and on the farther edge of town, little necessity for more than a small reserve will exist.

### **(B) The Details of Occupation, etc.**

#### **(1) Specific Duties, Section Assignments, and Distribution of Troops.**

As stated in the foregoing, the battalion should be regarded as the working unit and the basis of section assignments, etc. Its duties include:— (1) the clearing away of all opposition; (2) searching for arms, etc.; (3) collection of arms; (4) providing a temporary guard for the occupied section until relieved by a provost guard.

The division of the battalion for the performance of the foregoing duties is similar to its tactical formation for an attack. The strength, etc., of its subdivisions is governed by combat principles. The duty of clearing away all opposition and the search for arms is performed by the firing line. The collection of arms, the supply of the guard and any reinforcing of the firing line is performed by the battalion support.

The units designated for the firing line should be assigned definite sub-sections and be directed to cooperate in the advance and the duties incident thereto. In the assignment of sections to battalions, and of sub-sections within the battalion, streets must not be specified as boundaries between the sections or sub-sections. As a rule, the boundaries will be the median lines half way between streets. If a battalion has a single street assigned it, its section will extend to the middle of the block on each side, and there will be no sub-sections. If it has two or more streets assigned, there will be a subsection for each street.

#### **(2) The Firing Line.**

The firing line furnishes no guards. It continues its advance through the town. The senior officer of the firing line commands the same and regulates its advance, which should be simultaneous, block by block. No part of the firing line should advance beyond a block without the above officer's authority.

In performing its duties the firing line may advance along the streets or through the buildings and patios adjoining. Both methods are advocated; the former presents a more favorable target to the snipers, while the latter permits the men to get out of hand, leads to confusion and incompleteness of the work. Both methods may have to be used, especially in circular or irregular shaped towns. Where practicable the street system is deemed best.

In dividing the section among the troops of the firing line a prerequisite is to have an officer in charge of each street. The strength assigned to each street will vary in proportion to the depth and width of the section and the size of the companies. Platoons and even half platoons may be sufficient in some cases. Still the company as a whole should remain under the Captain's control and assignments arranged with this in view.

Each force assigned to any street should be organized into a MAIN BODY, a STREET DETACHMENT, a ROOF DETACHMENT and a SEARCHING DETACHMENT. The strength of the detachments will depend upon the opposition encountered and the amount of work required of them. Generally one or two squads are sufficient for each detachment.

The STREET DETACHMENT operates along the street and in advance of the SEARCHING DETACHMENT. It clears away all opposition in the street, in windows, doors, window porches, etc. It advances from one cross street to the near side of the next and then awaits orders. The advance is made with a column of files on each side of the street, such cover as is afforded by doors, windows, etc., being utilized. The men on one side of the streets should be charged with responding to any hostile fire delivered from upper windows and roofs on the other side, etc. When the next cross street is reached the detachment does not cross it but responds from concealed positions to any hostile fire delivered from the adjacent blocks on the cross street. This action, combined with that of the ROOF DETACHMENTS, should clear out any opposition on the cross street.

After opposition on the cross street is disposed of and the ROOF DETACHMENT of the same organization has reached the top of the houses at the near side of the cross street, word is sent to the officer commanding the street. After the SEARCHING DETACHMENT has completed its work, he has a flag or handkerchief, etc., raised in the cross street to indicate his readiness for a new advance.

The commander of the firing line, after assuring himself of the readiness of all troops, signals by his whistle, etc., for the entrance into the next block, which should be made simultaneously by the whole line.

The ROOF DETACHMENT should be under charge of an officer or experienced non-commissioned officer, it is divided into two sections, one for each side of the street. These sections gain the roofs at once and gradually advance, as far as practicable from roof to roof, until the last roof of the block is reached. From this point the DETACHMENT disposes of any opposition located on roofs or in houses on the opposite side of the cross street or down the street it is operating on. The fire of this DETACHMENT must be directed to its front. Flank and cross fire would endanger friendly troops. The DETACHMENT remains on the roof of the houses on the near side of the cross street until a new ROOF DETACHMENT has gained the roofs of the houses on the far side. When this action is about to be taken the old ROOF DETACHMENT should be so informed. The old ROOF DETACHMENT joins its MAIN BODY, when the new (advance) ROOF DETACHMENT is in place.

The SEARCHING DETACHMENT works in as many groups as practicable, designated as needed by the officer in command of the street. These parties systematically

search every building and patio and every room in every building of its half of the block. The search must be very thorough, probable hiding places discovered, etc. The principal object of this slow and deliberate occupation of the town is to secure all arms, etc., during the first stages of occupancy and thus prevent sniping and disturbances later on. The importance of this work must be impressed on the men. All arms and ammunition found by the DETACHMENT are placed in the street in one pile for each block. As explained later, these are cared for by the support.

After the SEARCHING DETACHMENT, has completed its work in the block and joined the STREET DETACHMENT, the officer in command should have a check made to discover losses, etc. The signal of readiness for the next advance, can then be given.

The MAIN BODY of the street force is utilized to reinforce the STREET, SEARCHING, etc., DETACHMENTS. This force is held under cover of a cross street until the next cross street is cleared when, by a rapid advance, it gains the cover of that street. New ROOF DETACHMENTS, etc., are then made for the next advance.

### (3) The Battalion Support.

The battalion support performs the triple function of collecting the arms, reinforcing the firing line and furnishing the guards.

Special details should be made, under charge of an officer, for the collection of the arms. Carts, etc., should be impressed and used for this purpose. The arms, piled in each block by the firing line, should be carted to some central place in the battalion section and held for orders from higher authority.

As the firing line clears out the various blocks, guards should be detailed from the support to observe this part of the district and to watch the arms until the collecting detail has taken them away. Guards should immediately inspect areas assigned them to see that no houses have been overlooked by the searching parties, or are occupied by dangerous persons after the passage of the searching parties. In some cases where resistance is particularly bitter, it may be necessary to evict all the inhabitants of some blocks, or even of an entire city: this duty will generally fall on the guards and not on the searching parties. By use of patrols large areas may be covered.

The support, in one body, should follow the firing line at a suitable distance (2 or 3 blocks). Connecting files for communication are kept on each street. The support may find frequent opportunity for a free advance on one street with the object of flanking the barricades etc. on another. Communication should be maintained by the support with adjacent units and regimental headquarters.

**(4) Machine Guns.**

Machine guns are valuable in this work for flanking fire against barricades, to clear out streets, towers, etc. Their mobility and inconspicuousness permit their use to advantage from windows and roofs at street corners and from towers.

They cannot be allowed to advance or operate independent of the commanders of the firing line as in attacks. Such action would endanger friendly troops and lead to a lack of coordination. It is better to assign them to battalions and have them operate under the battalion commander's orders at such places and times as he deems best.

**(5) Useful Adjuncts.**

The following tools and others which will suggest themselves can often be secured and used to an advantage.

Shovels, lanterns, crow-bars, heavy sledge hammers, axes, pick axes, saws, cold chisels, small ladders, tables, rope, railroad ties, rails and large timbers for battering rams. Occasions may arise for the use of hand grenades, dynamite, gun cotton, etc.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL FUNSTON:

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