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(Cont.) UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE PHILIPPINES
TENTH MILITARY DISTRICT - MF
HEADQUARTERS 109TH DIV.
COTABATO SECTOR

IN THE FIELD
20 OCT. 1943

From F. D. McGee, Lt. Col. U. S. A.
to C. O. 109TH DIV.

Subject: REPORT ON 118TH INF.

1. The organization of the Regiment has been delayed. Matas has refused to join the 118th Inf. regiment on the ground that the peace and safety of the community would be endangered by Maj. Pendatun as Regimental Commander and points to the armed attack that Pendatun planned against him in July. He insist that Fertig has in effect, promised recognition of his unit as a Regiment in letters exhibited and confidentially in letters which he would not show me because he said, "That is a military secret". This resolve is strengthened by the recent letter of Capt. Gumbay Piang who has been authorized by Col. Fertig to organize and command the 119th Inf. Regt. of the USFIP. Matas insist, rightly, that he surpasses Piang many time in men, arms, and record of accomplishment and priority of application. His legal advisers point out that my orders are from the C.O. 109th Div. but that I can show no order placing the 118TH Inf. Regt. in that division.

2. Matas refused to relinquish command on many ground including those that since Col. Fertig recognized him as C.O. of that unit, Col. Fertig alone can order his release. It was upon my advice, accepted without question by you, that Capt. Orbase was transferred to the 118th Inf. for the special purpose of commanding that Bn. This change had been advised by certain civilians, at least one acting regular officer and are civilian officer of the Matas Bn. He has shown unfitness for command as follows: (1) He has never been able to compose the conflicting interests of the various groups of his command who have at times defied one another with their armed forces.

(2) Some of his officers had joined and served with him as a result of direct or veiled threats that he would prevent their leaving. There are now at least two of his former officers who were detailed for duty with the Regiment, Gapultos and Reyes who were at Mailag, but are afraid to cross the river. They have been denounced by Matas to his men and then warned that their lives would not be safe if they should leave their houses. Similar action was taken with Lt. Estrada because he urged Matas to submit to the organization as ordered by me.

(3) His reports need checking which is impossible with him in command. Some of his listed rifles are reported to be with Page, with Goballa, with Delangalen and in Misamis. Others present are not listed. Regular soldiers who joined with rifles last year and fought well had their rifles taken from them and turned over to civilians who have promised to stick by him in defiance of all orders. He let out seventy regulars in favor

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of civilians. (4) Against my advice and warning he appealed to the civilians in writing and in speeches to demonstrate before me and to aid him in resisting orders. (5) His uncontested Bn. area is west of the Libungan river but he insist upon keeping groups to the east of that river which groups refuse to cooperate with the Bn. operating here. Their C.O. will not report to me their dispositions and plans and when he asks for reinforcement we can not find the location of the men we are supposed to reinforce. Another reason for planning his release of command is for his own good. After the war he may be required to answer charges and accusations. He would be in a better position to do so if he would, from now on, take loyal but subordinate part.

3. At first he refused to accept any orders so long as his rank was lower than that of Delangalen. Then he agreed on all other points upon my guarantee that the ranks would be equalized. That night he changed his mind and decided to not submit. Later he agreed to submit provided Col. Fertig ordered it. Still later he would not even promise that.

4. I issued an order 10 days ago for all regulars to join on the 17 or be considered deserters and that volunteers were invited to join but if they would be out permanently. I cancelled that order after seeing Piangs letter.

Many think that Matas is entitled to and can get equal treatment. If that is so my orders could be disobeyed with impunity. Matas sent his third envoy of one officer and five men to HQ, 10TH TM. a few days ago. I recommend that the plan to put that unit in the 118th as a Bn. be adhered to and that no members or rifles of that Bn. be accepted in any other Regiment. If Matas should be given authority to operate as an independent unit I recommend it be in a different area. If he remained here he would interfere with our use of the highway towards Cotabato and thru the Militia and the units placed on this side of the Libungan river would interfere with the food supply of the 118th as he is doing now. Any of the 4000 Militia who cooperate with the 118th in supplying food is abused by him.

6. The civilians are divided. Under the spell of oratory they become angry, dangerous mobs in his support. Privately many of them say that the majority favor the orders but most of them are afraid to tell him that. His Woman's Club resolved to enjoin him to submit but lacked the necessary courage.

7. He has always expressed friendship for me but the last time I went to him the sentinels there had ordered to prevent me from taking any companion into his camp area. The order mentioned specifically cargadores, bodyguard and Capt. Orbase. The sentinels tried to stop Lt. Valdepenas, my only companion. This made me lose my temper which caused me to do the unpardonable and dangerous thing of disobeying the sentinels by ordering Valdepenas to proceed with me.

8. The enemy is on the offensive here. A detachment of 50 to 100 Japs have made several raids during the last week burning houses, palay and corn, bayonetting one civilian and

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taking another as prisoner. We expended 170 rounds of ammunition and claimed 17 enemy casualties of which 8 have been verified as dead. They threaten to continue attacking, to take the Sayre Highway for enough north to cut our line of communication and to organize us by destroying our food supply. We have some disadvantages such as being on the defensive, having no back area into which we could withdraw and live and lacking certain things necessary for a determined stand here.

9. It is difficult to decide how much should be put in a report in the clear. Our needs as indicated in radiograms remain accute. Matas has a dependable area and has the equipment and a reasonable amount of supplies to depend it with.

10. Food supplies in the Bn. area of Capt. Udtog is adequate but in this Midsayap area so much has been destroyed. The rivalry of factions and the instructions to the Militia to not to cooperate contribute to the food difficulty of the 118th. Money would do a lot to solve that problem.

11. Lieut. (Datu) Abas Mastura, MMF, is here from near Lebak. He wants to move his outpost to between Upi and Cotabato and transfered to the 118th. Any such transfers must be discouraged. They would ruin the discipline of any army and the authority of any leader. Tactical reasons only could justify changes of station or command. It seems that Capt. Goballa has left the command of Capt. Magsakay and is independent. If he has left it should be without pay or prospects of recognition. Matas claims that Goballa plans to join him.

12. Some of this is of primary if not sole interest to the C. G. 10th MD instead of the C.O., 109th Div. but it seems better to include it all in one report especially since I expect those two will be in conference soon.

13. With the Province cut as it now is by the enemy our problem could be better handled if one Regiment were entirely north of the Cotabato River with Hq. near Midsayap, one entirely south with Hq. at Buluan or Koronadal and if there is a third its Hq. should be on the Upi-Lebak line. Such a disposition is not possible now but might be later.

14. It is requested that this envoy be allowed to bring back supplies-medicine, ammunition, stationery, and radio. Lieut. Batua is expected to amplify this request. The principle medicine needed is for amoebic dysentery. Next is local anaesthetic, calcium, sulfa drugs etc.

15. It has been reported that at least a company of Moro and Christian between here and Cotabato city wished to organize an outpost on that line and join the 118th. It is not clear to me if the Moros are expected to join us or the MMF. A former member of a Matas envoy recently returned and explained that the MMF got the same pay but more promptly and they had no combat or tactical duties but could stay at home. If that is so no more should want to join the regular USFIP. I still need enlightenment on the whole MMF and Militia situation. I request authority to organize such men as Divisional M.P. S.

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16. Capt. Tomas Reodica, V. C., P.A. is reputed to have become a manufacturing chemist in a small way. Some other Doctors questioned the efficacy of some of his drugs but they sell and he would be good material for guinine work at Malay-balay. He has a family. It is not easy to interview him because he is afraid to go to Matas' Hq. This is because Matas once had him under arrest for non-cooperation.

17. My request for Mr. Kuder must be withdrawn temporarily. Under the present circumstances we could not offer him reasonable protection.

18. The Piang 119th Regiment presents some problems. Leuit. Afdal came here while Piang was at G HQ, and I was with Matas. He offered to join the 118th with about 40 rifles. Yesterday I saw a letter from Piang to Afdal which indicates that the former depends upon the later to be with him. That will probably cause a conflict that no one but Col. Fertig can decide if Afdal should continue to choose the 118th. I shall do all what I can to prevent such conflict but my authority does not cover it. Piang is also urging Matas to join him. If that should be permitted most of my orders and efforts will be nullified. Most of the officers of the Matas Bn. want to join the 118th under Capt. Orbase as Bn. Commander (Matas would be E.O. or a Co. C. O.) but if Matas were allowed to transfer his Bn. to another unit he could and would order the officers to go against their wishes. That release from restraint would make it possible for him to completely starve the 118th out of the area. That would be bad because, for the present, we must depend upon the 118th for all offensive work. And most of the defensive work in Cotabato. Largely thru his orders to the civilians (Militia) he has already reduced the Delangalen Bn. to one meal a day at times. A new assignment Area is necessary. I believe much of the territory Piang expect to occupy is now assigned to the 118th. The Piang unit has its uses politically or as a matter of policy. It may prove itself of tactical use also. He said he brought ammunition. That should make him of vital importance in our present emergency.

19. Much of this report would be unnecessary if I could prove my authority and could be sure that I would be backed up.

20. What action should I take towards retiring for disability an EM of the P. A. who was permanently crippled by wounds receive in battle?

21. Lieut Diron Tambilawan brought a letter from the C. G. dated Aug. 29 and departed for GHQ on Sept. 24. I did not see him. These have questioned here do not think he can be relied upon as a contact agent because he has little control over his men and because he has two more powerful enemy neighbors who successfully try to prustate many of his plans. He may prove capable in this assignment.

22. It is recommended that Father Haggerty be asked to GHQ to report his observations in Cotabato to the C. G. before adverse action is taken on recommendations contained herein. My request that Piang should not absorb the Matas Bn. is because of any hostility to Piang or his organization. I am more favorably inclined towards him than to any other Cotabato leader and, altho justice

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might deny it, I believe that policy does justify his raising a unit. I hope he will be able to raise a whole Regiment but not by breaking up the 118th which I have been ordered to organize. The reasons for this are tactical and not personal. Father Haggerty should be able to give light on this. The fact that neither Piang nor the C.G.'s observer with Piang has contacted me makes me think that they must consider me hostile.

23. Since typing the above, your letter of Oct. 5 arrived with three cartons of cigarettes. A note from Lt. Pabualan said he was guarding the boundary 1000 rds of rifle ammunition. This number does not check but he may not have counted the ammunition or may have miswritten it. A Lt. started from here to get it.

24. The comments for Maj. Pendatun hurt. Some of them I was instructed to report on, on others I should. Par. numbering is mine. Par. 4 (a) Piang's feelings are natural and need no apology. (b) Datu Mantil had no arrangement or understanding with the enemy. Part of the truce that developed was by subordinates without Udtog's knowledge altho, by what I believe was a sort of mutual consent, each had his own side of the road for law enforcement and administration of markets. I think this began without Pendatun's knowledge or consent. I do not approve of it but - understood from what you said that a similar condition existed in places to the North where our troops and the Japs left each other

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

R. B. Slade
 R. B. SLADE
 2d Lt, Inf
 Actg Ass't Adj Gen

Sgt. E. J. Gernigan