

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES TROOPS IN PUERTO RICO,

Rio Piedras, October 11, 1898.

The Commanding Officer,

United States Troops, **HUMACAO**.

Sir:

The command that you will exercise at **HUMACAO** is one that requires for successful administration the utmost tact, firmness, activity and sound judgment on the part of yourself and your officers and men, and to aid you in guiding yourself accordingly the Major General Commanding directs me to invite your attention to the following outline of the policy to be pursued:

Much bitter and revengeful feeling exists in Puerto Rico between certain classes of the inhabitants, begotten from personal animosities and political and other differences.

The transition period the island is now going through has seemed a propitious time for a few of these people to commit acts of violence, pillage, incendiarism and even bloodshed, in small villages and remote places. The motive is usually revenge for past injuries, and possibly it sometimes springs from a purpose to expel, through intimidation, some of the property owners from the island who perhaps made themselves obnoxious under the system of Spanish rule. To prevent acts of lawlessness, to allay differences, to reassure the people and to preserve good order, must therefore be your main object. All grades of society must be taught that disorder will not be tolerated. To effect this, existing laws, unless suspended by the highest military authority on the island, must be enforced and the civil officers supported in all that is necessary to bring offenders to justice. Should lawlessness occur where the civil officers are impotent to act the military must arrest and punish, but it is expected

as a rule that peaceable conditions will be brought about by the constituted officials.

In most of the communities where there have been violence and incendiarism the offenders are known, or can be readily discovered, and these offenders must be brought to justice. Arbitrary arrests, however should be avoided, except when the offender is caught in the crime, or there is indisputable evidence to prove his guilt as there is much tendency among the people in their feverish condition of mind to entertain unfounded suspicions and shrink from threatened violence that is seldom realized.

It has been the policy of the former rulers to furnish guards for haciendas, sugar and coffee plantations and other property, billeting soldiers at such places and in very small villages. This has been the rule to such a degree that these property owners and the people of some small communities have lost their self-reliance and the courage to protect themselves. It is intended that they shall recover these essential qualities of manhood as early as possible and requests for such guards will be denied unless there is convincing evidence and absolute necessity that they should be provided. It will be the exception, rather than the rule, to furnish such guards and they will be recalled when the danger is passed.

It is expected that you will keep yourself fully informed of what is going on in your section of the country so that you may be at all times prepared to act. You should send frequent scouts to neighboring towns unoccupied by our troops and obtain reliable knowledge as to whether the laws are being enforced at all points. Should disorders occur that cannot at the time be handled by the civil authorities you must act promptly to preserve the peace and protect property.

A zealous performance of your duties is expected under these general instructions. There may arise many questions for you to determine not given in detail here. If they

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require immediate action your good judgment is relied on to solve them in the interest of peace and harmony, but as a rule matters of material importance should be forwarded to district headquarters.

R. *R.* Should you be relieved from duty these instructions must be turned over to your successor. Acknowledge receipt.

Very respectfully,

W. W. [unclear]
Brigadier General, U.S.V.,
Chief of Staff.

444pm. U. S. Troops in P. R.
Rio Piedras, October 11/98

Sheldon, Mr. W.
Brig. Genl. U.S.A.

General letter of instruction -
some in regard to con-
mand stored at Huma
near

Chief of Staff.
Brigadier General, U.S.A.