

ATTACK ON AMERICA!

Startling Expose of U. S. Lack of Defense

By GENERAL ARED WHITE

WHO'S WHO AND WHAT'S HAPPENED

CAPTAIN BENNING, daring U. S. intelligence officer flies to Washington from Mexico City with information of plans for a Mexican invasion of the United States.

VAN HASSEK, master of Mexican forces, operates through

RUIZ, dictator of Mexico, Van Hassek's figurehead. The whole army and navy departments are a hive of strained activity.

GENERAL HAGUE is chief of staff of the United States army.

CHAPTER VIII

At Fort Sam Houston, on the outskirts of San Antonio, Lieutenant Colonel Bart, corps area G-2 chief received a disturbing bit of information late in the day. Shortly after sunset a formation, identified as bombers, had passed over the Rio Grande at a point west of Brownsville, headed north. Bart had telephoned the vil-

ages of Kinsville, Gregory, Skidmore, Beeville and Kennedy to the north of the border. In Texas, without picking up any further report of the flight, from which he concluded that the bombers must have taken out across the Gulf of Mexico.

He had alerted Galveston and New Orleans, but as the evening passed no reports came from those cities. Neither Kelly field nor Randolph field had any planes out. A query to Washington brought the response that no American bombers were known to be in the lower Texas region, or along the Gulf of Mexico.

Colonel Maguire, corps area chief of staff, was inclined to the belief that Mexican bombers had been making a test flight and had turned back across the Gulf of Mexico on finding themselves north of the Rio Grande. But he directed that all regular forces in

Texas and throughout the corps area keep on the alert through the night, particularly along the Rio Grande.

The reported bomber expedition had followed a series of reports during the afternoon that had put General Brill and the whole corps area staff on the jacked edge. A Mexican had brought into Laredo the report that heavy motorized divisions were spending the day in screened bivouacs in Coahuila and Nueva Leon.

Colonel Hart had spread his net to the north and east to Georgia and the Carolinas. Shortly after ten the field telephone rang from the 11th Infantry at Laredo. Colonel Denn of that outpost regiment had an unconfirmed report that an unidentified plane had been shot down by Mexican anti-aircraft in the vicinity of Monclova.

Half an hour later came news from Colonel Denn that was not to be ignored.

"Four flights have passed over Laredo within the past fifteen minutes," Denn said. "If my ears know an American plane these were not American. They were headed due north, and traveling high and fast."

General Brill calmly made his own estimate of the situation. Parked in the grounds of Fort Sam Houston were the sixteen hundred stinking new trucks of the second division. The second, alerted and with all leaves suspended, was in barracks and camp ready for emergency. At Kelly and Randolph fields, nearby, were the planes and supplies used in training a small new army of pilots for an expanded air service.

"Have the second division get their trucks out of here as soon as possible," he directed his chief of staff. "They'll also disperse their artillery. Notify the mayor of San Antonio and suggest that he have all lights cut off. Notify the flying fields of our information. Notify Eagle Pass and Fort Bliss."

He paused to receive another report from Bart.

"Sir, third army headquarters just called in from Atlanta. They've a report from Charleston of bombers flying high over that city at 10:17 o'clock, headed north by east."

"Get General Hague at Washington on the wire for me immediately!" the corps area commander directed.

In a few crisp sentences, his voice unaffected by excitement, General Brill retailed his report to the chief of staff of the army. "I don't want to be an alarmist,

Hague," Brill said, "but my personal opinion is we're all in for hell before much longer. Frankly, I've felt it in my bones all day. I hardly need tell you I must have more troops down here and supplies. I have less than three days of fire stocked up for my artillery, not much more than that for the infantry."

"I directed Ordnance to send you seven hundred tons today, Brill. That'll supply your second division for two or three days, and in the meantime the situation ought to clarify, one way or another. I'll report what you told me immediately to the president. Please keep me posted of any developments. We'll arrange a special wire for you at once."

Outside there was orderly commotion. Troops were pouring out of barracks and bivouac camps already, the first drivers were moving their trucks out of the fort.

Another report from Colonel Denn. The colonel's voice now cracked with intensity. One of his intelligence scouts, disguised

as a Mexican peon, had the word from friendly Mexicans that a heavy motor column was moving north from the vicinity of Palo Blanco. Another column was reported moving by night through Tamaulipas toward Brownsville and a third was said to have passed Mesquite in Coahuila, headed in the direction of Eagle Pass.

An hour later the second division's trucks, filled with men, were whirring out of the fort, rubber-tired artillery was shifting its light and medium caisson out of the zone of possible danger.

The alarm had spread into San Antonio. A local station was broadcasting the report of planes on the way up from the Rio Grande. People were cautioned not to display lights, to avoid hunching up in crowds in event an air attack developed. At the same time, the broadcaster reassured them that the flight of aircraft might not have hostile purposes.

An aide, whom General Brill had

sent out into the garrison to observe, burst into headquarters, breathless, his face stripped of color.

"Sir, airplanes!" he panted. "Flying high—you you can hear them coming!"

General Brill left his staff at their allotted jobs and went out side with his aide. The garrison was dark, headquarters worked behind drawn shades.

The roar of motors filled the air as trucks and artillery continued to roll out of the garrison. But above that he caught the sharp whine of high-powered engines far overhead.

The 69th anti-aircraft artillery had got its guns in position, but was withholding its searchlights pending development. Suddenly a small plane zoomed down over the garrison and dropped a flare that turned night into day.

Brill stood, calmly observing. He knew that flare was the first violence of an invasion of the United States. He knew that in

a few minutes the bombers would circle over their target of Fort Houston and let drive. He knew, too, that there was nothing he could do to prevent what was to follow.

A hissing shriek caught his ears. Involuntarily he raised himself on his toes and placed his finger-tips at his ears. A savage flash of yellow flame leaped from the earth into the heavens. The ground under him shook with volcanic intensity from the savage wrath of a heavy bomb.

Long fingers of light leaped into the sky from the 68th's searchlights. Another bomb detonated, this time in the field from which the trucks were whirring. Brill caught, in the momentary flash of light, the grim tragedy of shattered men and material. Above the din he heard the cries of wounded men. Another bomb crashed and another. His anti-aircraft handful of guns were almost lost in the din of titanic thunder that crashed from the sky.

(To be continued)



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