

COLONEL SIDNEY T. MASHBIR **US Army, Retired (Deceased)**



Sidney Mashbir was born in 1891 and by 1904, at the age of 13, he was the bugler of B Company, 1st Arizona Infantry (Arizona National Guard). By 1916, he was the Assistant Intelligence Officer of the Ajo-Yuma District. In the fall of 1916, Mashbir commanded K Company, 1st Arizona Infantry. When accepted into the Regular Army, he transferred to the 2d Infantry at Governors Island, New York, where he became the post Department Intelligence Officer. Mashbir was promoted on 6 November 1917 to Captain and on 9 October 1918 to Major.

It was during his time at Governors Island, in the midst of World War I, that Mashbir noticed large numbers of German immigrants in the Coastal Artillery. After having them investigated, he found cause to search the quarters of Paul Otto Kuno, a Noncommissioned Officer. Mashbir found a key to a safety deposit box that led to a log

kept on various coastal batteries with technical details concerning their operation. Kuno was interned until the end of the war.

After World War I, Mashbir was detailed to Syracuse University to be its first Professor of Military Science. In 1919, the War Department approved his request to study in Japan, and the following year, while attached to the Military Attaché Office, he submitted a Japanese language handbook for a four-year course of study. In 1922, he developed the M-Plan, a means by which information could be removed from Japan during wartime. He resigned from the Army in 1923 so he could implement this plan while working for a civilian firm in Japan.

In 1923, Mashbir returned to the United States but was prevented from re-entering the Army because of a change in law. But in 1927, he was ordered to active duty in the Military Intelligence Reserve (Japanese Section) in the office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G2. During this assignment, he rewrote the order of battle manual on Japan. Mashbir returned to Japan as a civilian in 1937.

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, Mashbir was commissioned in the Signal Corps and, in September 1942, he flew to Australia to be on GEN Douglas MacArthur's staff as a Linguist. In 1943, he served as Chief of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), which had a peak strength of 2,000 personnel who translated and exploited more than 350,000 captured Japanese documents and interrogated 14,000 Japanese prisoners. After the fall of the Philippines, Mashbir, while still head of ATIS, was also placed in MacArthur's executive group in connection with linguistic duties. During Japan's surrender in 1945, Mashbir served as MacArthur's translator.

In December 1945, Mashbir left Japan for an assignment with the Office of the Adjutant General of the Army. In 1951, after failing to be restored to Regular Army status, Mashbir retired at age 60. In 1953 he published a book entitled I was an American Spy. Mashbir passed away in 1973.

COL Mashbir was inducted posthumously in the MI Hall of Fame in 1988. In 1991, he was memorialized when Mashbir Hall at Fort Huachuca was dedicated in his honor.



An Allied Translator and Interpreter Section "scanning conference". An American Nisei seated at the extreme right is scanning a captured document while COL Mashbir (seated fifth from left) and representatives of several arms and services (including a Chinese General) look on and listen.



COL Mashbir, Chief of ATIS, acts as interpreter during a pre-conference interval.



The staff of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section in 1943.



Sidney Mashbir as a Language Officer in Tokyo (January 1923); taken prior to resigning from the Regular Army and his ill-fated attempt to execute his M-Plan in Japan